

JULY RED BOOK MAGAZINE

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PHOTOGRAPHIC ART STUDIES Beautiful Women of the Stage

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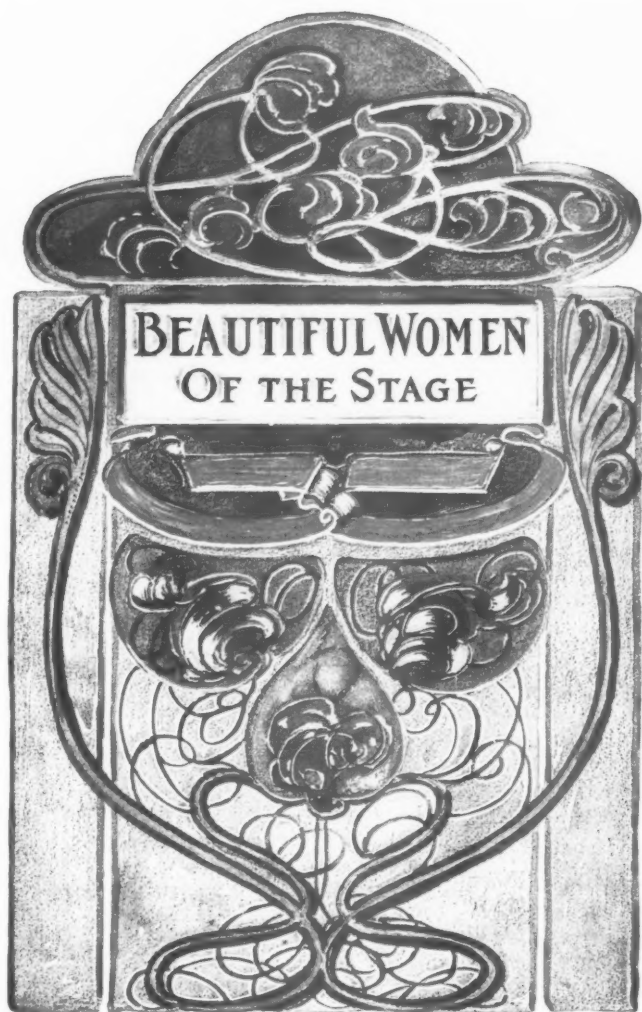
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LOUISE LeBARON
in Grand Opera
Photograph by Hall, New York



MRS. SAM HARRIS
(Wife of Mr. Harris of Cohan & Harris)
Photograph by Muffett Studio, Chicago





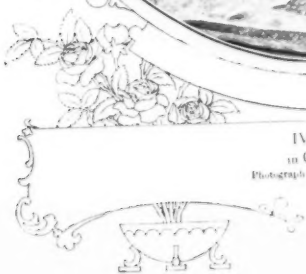
ALICE LLOYD
in Vaudeville
Photograph by Moffett Studio, Chicago



EDNA BATES
in "The Lady of the Slipper"
Photograph by Muffett studio, Chicago

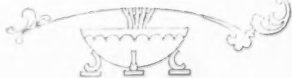


IVY SCOTT
in Grand Opera
Photograph by Mishkin, New York





MADGE TITHERADGE
in "A Marriage of Convenience"
Photograph by Nefter Studio, Chicago





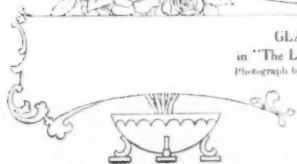
GERTRUDE PLATT
in "The Girl at the Gate"
Photograph by Mallett Studio, Chicago



BERNICE CALDWELL
in "Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm"
Photograph by Muffett Studio, Chicago

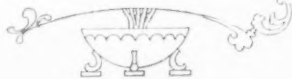


GLADYS ZELL
in "The Lady of the Slipper"
Photograph by Moffett Studio, Chicago





DOROTHY DICKSON
in Vaudeville
Photograph by Mottet Studio, Chicago





ETHEL SYKES
A Film Play Favorite
Photograph by Moffett Studios, Chicago



SAXONE MORELAND
in "The Yellow Jacket"
Photograph by Maffett Studio, Chicago.



Dolan passed into a vacant back sitting-room and pulled aside the shade.

Drawn by Grant T. Reynard to illustrate Frederick R. Kochdoli's mystery story of a city jungle, "THE BRASS KEY," which begins on page 561.

July
1914

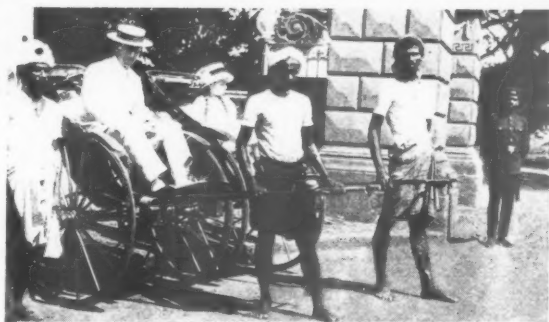
THE
RED BOOK
MAGAZINE

Vol. XIII

Nº 3

RAY LONG, Editor

James Francis Dwyer, author of "The White Tentacles," etc., at Government House, Ceylon.



"The Little Gold Ears of Sleeth," his first story since his globe-circling trip, will be in the August Red Book.

THERE is a zest in setting the pace. We are aglow with it. Compare this July Red Book with any magazine on the news-stands. Then study this forecast of the pace-setting fiction which will be in the August issue:

Short Stories By These Master Writers

Meredith Nicholson

Arthur C. Train

Reginald Wright Kauffman

Ida M. Evans

John Barton Oxford

Walter Jones

E. Phillips Oppenheim

James Francis Dwyer

Opie Read

Albert Payson Terhune

Ellis Parker Butler

And Several Others

AND——

The Two Splendid Serials By
James Oliver Curwood and Elinor Glyn

THE RED BOOK IS SETTING THE
PACE IN THE MAGAZINE WORLD

The Rescue of

A JOURNEY BY MISS AMESBURY, OF
BOSTON, INTO DARKEST INDIANA

By Meredith Nicholson

Author of "Otherwise Phyllis," "The House of a Thousand Candles," etc.

THIS is a delightful story: just that, and nothing more. It is not especially dramatic; it has no vital point or moral; it is not uproariously humorous. You will chuckle as you read, but we doubt if you will laugh. It is not impossible that you may guess the outcome before you have read more than a quarter of the way. But you'll enjoy the story a lot. You'll enjoy meeting Felicity and the eccentric Miss Amesbury and you'll enjoy their travels into Darkest Indiana. And you'll revel in the charming manner of Meredith Nicholson's telling, for the farcical vein which characterizes this story shows him in one of his happiest moods.

PARDON me, but the courage you display in attacking what I assume to be a second piece of apple pie commands my admiration. If you have no objection, I'll sit beside you while I drink this glass of milk, which the man at the counter assures me has passed the severest chemical tests."

In this manner Miss Prudence Amesbury brought herself to the attention of Felicity Holliday in a one-arm lunch-room in the financial district of Boston.

"I have seen you often in the office of Beverly & Crosby, where I am a stenographer, and of course I know you by reputation," the girl replied; and she added her name and age in response to direct inquiries.

"As you are with Beverly & Crosby you are probably somewhat familiar with my affairs. Ashfield Crosby has been my attorney for years, and I have often admired the neatness of the documents turned out of that office."

Felicity murmured her appreciation and politely awaited further disclosures.

"You have doubtless heard me referred to as a lunatic," continued Miss Amesbury, slowly sipping her milk, "and not without cause. My experiments

with the adventurous life have lately been the subject of absurd exaggerations in the New York papers. Our Boston journals, I need hardly add, are much too discreet to print my name without my express consent. I dare say Ashfield Crosby often speaks of me as a crank and a nuisance?" she ended inquiringly.

"If Mr. Crosby had ever done so, Miss Amesbury," replied the girl, coloring, "you may be sure no one would ever know it from me."

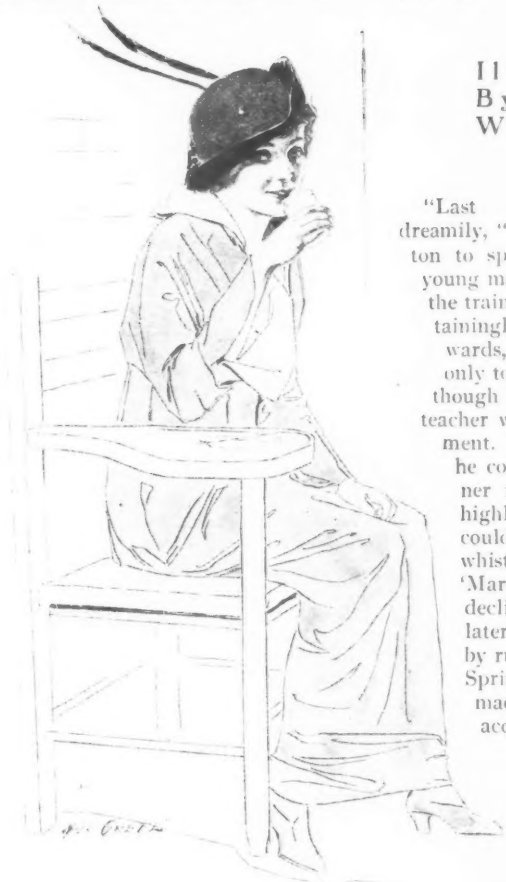
Miss Amesbury touched her lightly on the arm.

"You are well named Felicity, for that was the proper and felicitous answer to my question, which was distinctly underbred. I have a feeling that you and I are destined to know each other much better. May I ask whether you are engaged to be married, or entertain hopes of entering into any such arrangement at this time?"

"Nothing is further from my expectations," replied the girl. "A teller in a bank around the corner has taken me to see two musical comedies, and a young man who does something at the Arboretum calls on me every other Sunday afternoon, and we walked once to Concord. Those, you might say, are my only

Michael P. Quinn

Illustrated by
By
Will Grefé



"Last winter," replied Felicity, dreamily, "on my way to Great Barrington to spend Christmas, a delightful young man put my bag in the rack on the train, and talked to me very entertainingly. He wrote to me afterwards, and called to see me, but only to tell me that he was married, though unhappily. He was a music teacher with a great deal of temperament. He tested my voice and said he could easily put me into Wagner rôles in two years. He was highly plausible, but as I never could remember a tune and can't whistle more than half the air of 'Marching Through Georgia,' I declined his offer. When I heard later that his wife supported him by running a delicatessen shop at Springfield, I felt that I had made no mistake in ending our acquaintance."

"If that is the high altitude of romance in your twenty-four years, it's certainly fortunate that Chance threw you in my way. I feel that our meeting is

"A teller in a bank has taken me to see two musical comedies, and a young man who does something at the Arboretum calls on me every other Sunday afternoon, and we walked once to Concord. Those, you might say, are my only prospects."

prospects, and they're hardly collateral that a cautious bank would lend money on."

Miss Amesbury smiled grimly.

"I should hope not! If I'm not boring you, may I inquire whether you have ever enjoyed any adventures or have ever entrusted yourself to Chance for a day?"

in every sense providential — particularly as I am just starting on an adventure which seems likely to prove the most interesting of my life."

Felicity rested her elbow on the tray-arm of her chair and regarded Miss Amesbury with astonishment. This wealthy Beacon Street lady was one of Beverly & Crosby's most valued clients,

a fact which increased Felicity's amazement that she should be vouchsafing a mere stenographer so much of her time, particularly at mid-day in a crowded lunch room.

Felicity was a tall girl with a crown of yellow hair and a peaches-and-cream complexion. Her handsome blue eyes were unusually alert and intelligent; indeed, the briefs she had written in defense of some of the naughtiest combinations in restraint of trade that had ever been tested in the federal courts had developed her reasoning faculties to a high degree of efficiency.

As she glanced at the clock on the wall and began drawing on her gloves, Miss Amesbury inquired, "May I ask if you save any money?"

"I have three hundred and forty dollars in a trust company that pays three per cent," replied Felicity, and laughed so musically that Miss Amesbury smiled one of her rare smiles.

"Excellent! I hope you haven't the usual worthless brother you are sending through college and that your parents aren't financially embarrassing."

"My mother died when I was a baby, and my father, who is a grocer in Worcester, has shown little interest in my affairs since his second marriage, which occurred while I was indulging in a year at Radcliffe. I paid my way in college by doing typewriting for a Harvard professor. He was writing a book on 'The Humor of the Abyssians' which I found very depressing. The fact that a man of his acknowledged scholarship could find so much joy in prehistoric jokes prejudiced me against higher education."

"You needn't mention that person further," said Miss Amesbury disdainfully. "I recognize the man you have indicated and I dare say he underpaid you for your work. Your experiences have been pitifully meager, but, of course, you have had your dreams of romance, and you will make no mistake in frankly confessing them to me."

Felicity bowed her head meditatively and folded her hands on her knees.

"I'm almost ashamed to admit it, Miss Amesbury, but quite recently I have dreamed of hidden gold. I have had the

same dream three times. It seemed each time that I was following a rainbow—a most beautiful one—across the loveliest of green fields, and I kept running faster and faster, and just when I was nearly at the end and about to grasp the gold, I woke up."

Miss Amesbury's face betrayed the deepest interest in this revelation.

"And may I ask whether you were the only figure in that scene?"

"There was a young man," Felicity continued in a lower tone, "who sat on a fence smoking a pipe, quite near the end of the rainbow, and just before the bright colors vanished he would take the pipe out of his mouth and laugh. No; it wasn't as though he mocked me; it was a happy sort of laugh as though it were all some sort of joke."

"The recurring dream has been the subject of much discussion by psychologists, and I am convinced that yours has an important bearing upon your future. The young man was not, I assume, one you had ever seen before, or had any acquaintance with?"

"That is the most curious part of it," Felicity replied. "Three summers ago, when I was first with Beverly & Crosby, I used to go over to the Public Gardens for a breath of air at lunch time, and I passed that same young man frequently, and—please don't think ill of me for this—I followed him once and saw him enter the Brimstone Club in Park Street."

"No one ever told me a story half so suggestive as that! It was three years ago, you say?"

"Three years ago in July."

"And how many times have you seen him in the rainbow dream?"

"Three times—all within a month. And strange to say, the last time was last night!"

"That," declared Miss Amesbury, "is positively conclusive that Chance had arranged our meeting to-day. I had fully expected to have luncheon at home, but was delayed so long that I stopped here instead, and the result fully justifies my belief that we should give the freest rein to our impulses. Let us proceed to business without further delay. Will you become my secretary, at a salary double

that paid you by Beverly & Crosby—whatever that may be. Before you answer, it is only fair to say that your duties will differ radically from those of your present employment. You will accompany me on such excursions into the realm of adventure as I may choose to undertake, I shall expect you to bring into the arrangement with your twenty-four years the elements of romance which are closed to me at sixty-two. All I require is that you shall follow the pointing finger of Chance from the moment we set forth. Will you kindly indicate whether the proposition strikes you favorably?"

"Oh, it doesn't seem possible," cried Felicity, "that any such good fortune should come to me!"

Miss Amesbury nodded absently, opened her reticule, drew out a long manila envelope.

"In looking over my papers this morning, I became interested in a certificate for one hundred thousand shares of stock in the Brossville, Hinkleville & Oriental Railway in southern Indiana, which I have owned for over two years, without ever receiving a penny in dividends. Don't do me the injustice to assume that I ever paid cash for the stock. It was part of a legacy from a grateful friend in New Bedford whose life I undoubtedly prolonged by recommending a gout-cure which I had inherited from my grandfather. His will was intended to annoy his wife's relations, and I immediately gave the money bequest to the Bricklayers' Relief Fund, but the humor of that corporate name has been a factor in my refusal to part with the stock. In the last six months I have been importuned to sell it by a number of brokers whose persistence has aroused my suspicions and determined me to investigate the road."

"I remember," said Felicity, "that Mr. Crosby dictated a letter to you about the charter of the road, fully approving its legality. The name of the company seemed so funny I looked it up on the map. Mr. Crosby almost smiled at it himself."

"It pleases me that you see the absurdity of it. I was at my banker's to-day looking at an old lease when this cer-

tificate fell in my lap. I keep my safety-boxes in the most scrupulous order and it occurred to me that as that certificate deliberately slipped from its proper place in a bundle marked 'Doubtful,' it was a mandate from Chance that I should not delay in inspecting the landscape surrounding the Brossville, Hinkleville & Oriental. Within an hour after I placed the certificate in my reticule, you crossed my horizon. As I make it a rule to act quickly, we will start for Indiana to-night and see what adventures befall us. Please return to the office of Beverly & Crosby and submit your resignation immediately. Say to Mr. Crosby that you have accepted a position with me and that while your sudden departure may cause him some inconvenience, the occasion is unusual and imperative and that any feeling he may have about it he may charge to my account. And now," she added, drawing out a check-book and fountain pen, "I will hand you five hundred dollars as an advance on your salary. You had better place it at interest, as I shall pay all the expenses of this journey and in case I should meet with sudden death on our excursion you will not be left wholly destitute."

"That is most generous," replied the bewildered girl, watching the pen fly over the check-book.

"Please adjust your affairs with a view to dining with me at seven. Bring a suit-case containing essentials only and we will take the midnight train for New York, proceeding thence by way of Cincinnati to Brossville, the eastern terminus of the road to which destiny has pointed us. If I understand the time tables, we shall have most of the day in New York and I shall seize the opportunity to search for a mackintosh I lost at the Metropolitan Opera House while the guest of my friends the Salem P. Singlebys at a performance of 'Die Walküre' two weeks ago. I have spent considerable money in telegraphing Mr. Singleby about my loss and he had the temerity to send me a new raincoat, in the hope, I suppose, of closing the incident. Salem P. Singleby is the president of the Shoo Fly Railway System, and one of the greatest powers in Wall



A young man carrying a sample-case had crossed the platform briskly. He stopped short as Miss Amesbury addressed her
she asked in



him and bade her a cheerful good morning. "May I inquire whether you are officially connected with the B. H. & O.?"
time of accusation.

Street, but he seems incapable of understanding that it is a principle, not a mackintosh, that I am contending for. The fact that *Holan* sang that night as though suffering from adenoids added to my annoyance and I feel that the recovery of my raincoat will only measurably repay me for his vile performance.

"Should I finish the errand before train time we can spend a few hours at the Art Museum, where there's an alleged Rembrandt I suspect of coming from the brush of the same Hoboken sign-painter who nearly palmed off a fake Velasquez on Boston's shrewdest connoisseurs last fall. I am due in ten minutes at the rooms of the Bonnie Prince Charlie Club, which has undertaken the restoration of the Stuarts to the English throne. Kindly remember that we travel in light marching order, and you had better change that hat for something that won't look like a wet rooster in the humid airs of the Wabash. And now," she added, rising with decision, "kindly give this key to my safety vault to Mr. Crosby and tell him my will is on top in a blue envelope, and that if I return from this adventure by express, and those second cousins of mine in Dedham contest my will, he is to exhaust my estate in fighting their claims. Do you fully grasp those points?"

Felicity said she thought she grasped them, and hurried toward the offices of Beverly & Crosby.

II

WHEN Miss Amesbury and Felicity stepped from the train that had borne them from Cincinnati to Brossville, the new secretary was on the best of terms with her employer. In New York, the search for the mackintosh had been conducted with vigor and thoroughness. Distinguished members of the august board of directors of the Metropolitan Opera House had been hauled from important meetings in insurance offices, banks and trust companies to hear Miss Amesbury's complaint; and to Felicity's amazement they had met her demands for assistance with alacrity. At the opera house a rehearsal was stopped

while the infuriated principals were rigidly cross-examined; and when finally the mackintosh (clearly marked "Prudence Amesbury" with indelible ink under the collar) was found wrapped round a *Lohengrin* swan in the property room, Miss Amesbury retired triumphant.

Her effort to fix the authorship of the newly-found Rembrandt upon the Hoboken sign-painter was less successful; but she assured Felicity as they left the Museum that she had undoubtedly disturbed the peace of mind of the authorities. These experiences had not only proved highly diverting to Beverly & Crosby's late stenographer, but they had removed any lingering doubts as to Miss Amesbury's ability to lead an expedition into a strange land.

The porter of the chair-car in which they rode from Cincinnati grinned broadly as he set down their suit-cases on the platform at Brossville.

"Dat's de Oriental track right dere, ma'am. Reckon de train'll be in 'fore long."

The conductor, running out of the station reading his orders, paused a moment as Miss Amesbury lifted her hand imperiously.

"Your tickets read to Hinkleville, ladies. The train's marked 'Late' on the bulletin."

"My dear sir, this being a terminal and originating point, how can the train be late?"

The conductor signaled the engineer to go ahead.

"You're in luck, madam," he answered, measuring an open vestibule with his eye. "This is Wednesday and that train occasionally gets through on Wednesdays."

Miss Amesbury sniffed and bade Felicity note the conductor's reply. From the time they left Boston, the note-book had been called into requisition frequently. It already contained an appalling amount of memoranda, including numbers of New York taxi drivers, the price of a luncheon at a New York hotel which Miss Amesbury pronounced sinfully exorbitant, and the temperature of the Cincinnati sleeper at the hours of 11 p. m. and 2 a. m. The sleeping-car

temperatures had been recorded from a thermometer that Miss Amesbury carried for the purpose and she expressed her intention to report the tropical night to the president of the road.

After a colloquy with the joint agent of the intersecting lines, which led to further notations by Felicity, Miss Amesbury walked the length of the platform, where a number of huge signs painted in rude, amateurish lettering on tottering bill-boards immediately caught her attention. Felicity had begun to suspect that the B. H. & O. was a part of some huge joke and the signs strengthened this impression. One of them read:

THE GREAT ORIENTAL
GALLOPER

Reserve Space Now!

Weekly Excursions to the Orient!
Tokyo, Hong Kong, and Pekin!
Shake Hands with the Grand Lama!
Luxurious Service Throughout.

"The Galloper!" repeated Miss Amesbury with unconcealed delight. "Was ever a name so appropriate for a fast train? We will take passage for the entire trip on this superb Galloper. Chance has never played me false. These signs confirm my premonition that this is to be my greatest adventure. The fact that the train is late argues well for the B. H. & O. I have been delayed on extra fare trains on most of the best-managed roads in America. I beg your pardon, *sir*."

A young man carrying a sample-case had crossed the platform briskly and was turning up his trousers. He stopped short as Miss Amesbury addressed him and bade her a cheerful good morning.

"May I inquire whether you are officially connected with the B. H. & O.?" she asked in a tone of accusation.

"Not yet; but I shall be in a moment," he answered with an admiring glance at Felicity.

"Your remark is not wholly lucid," Miss Amesbury returned. "Will you kindly become intelligible?"

Having turned his trousers up to his shoe-tops, the traveler removed his hat and bowed sweepingly to both ladies.

"I've got to expose goods in Hinkleville emporiums and catch an inter-

urban for Terre Haute at 5:08; hence excuse haste. Keep us in touch with your needs. Ours is the only complete line of French sardines—warranted the last word in Ohio River minnows; the daily food of all the royal houses of Europe, and endorsed by the most capacious epicures from Peru to Peoria."

"Do I understand, *sir*," demanded Miss Amesbury with a withering glare, "that you're about to walk to Hinkleville?"

"If you don't, madam, my powers of statement are not worth the salary I draw from the old, reliable house of S. G. & B., wholesale only. If you're waiting for the Oriental Galloper I'll tell 'em to hurry up; but I won't make 'em bust the boiler if you're kidding me. There's a daily hack for Hinkleville that leaves the Grand Hotel about 11 A. M. but she's stuck in the mud somewhere and didn't get back yesterday. If you have greetings for friends at Hinkleville, I'm full of Christian kindness and will deliver the goods without commission."

"I hardly think we shall need your assistance," interposed Felicity, seeing that Miss Amesbury was about to explode with indignation. "Pray don't let us detain you longer."

"When you meet the Great Lama," remarked the drummer, "kindly oblige me by mentioning the S. G. & B. sardines, canned in native oil, and warranted to open fresh in any climate."

"When you boast of the freshness of your sardines," said Felicity, sweetly, "you are seriously in danger of becoming immodest. Bon voyage!"

"Stinged, alas, stung-*ed*!" cried the young man—whereupon he tapped his head twice with the brim of his derby and strode down the track whistling.

"Felicity," said Miss Amesbury impressively, "your last remark to that impudent person is the neatest retort I ever heard. Make a note of it! I have a friend in Cambridge who collects just such pleasantries with a view to putting them into a book."

An old man with a long white beard now attracted their attention. He emerged from an ancient wheel-less freight car beside the B. H. & O. track,

trundling a dilapidated wheelbarrow containing a hammer, a few spikes, a bunch of car waste and an oil can. As he dropped the handles of the barrow and began to fill his pipe, Felicity called to him from the platform:

"Have you any idea," she asked, "when the Galloper will arrive?"

"If I stand here talkin' to you all day she'll never come, miss. She's struck a loose rail at Raccoon Crick and a farmer out there telephoned for the wrecking car to come down and mend the track. He says havin' the Galloper standin' on the bridge makes 'im narvous."

"The Galloper in peril!" exclaimed Miss Amesbury. "Then Chance points clearly to us as the proper persons to render relief. Will you kindly tell me your name and position on the B. H. & O.?"

"Lemme see," he replied, lighting his pipe and inspecting the end of the match deliberately before throwing it away. "My name's Jeremiah Higgins, and the president app'inted me Super'intendint of Maintenance of Way last week, and the week afore that he app'inted me General Freight Agent with headquarters at Hong Kong, and a leetle afore that he issued orders makin' me Master Mechanic o' the Brossville shops, which is that old car I keep these things in. Them bein' the facts, ye can size up my job fer yourself."

"The president must be greatly impressed by your versatility, Mr. Higgins," said Miss Amesbury with asperity. "As the Galloper is no doubt filled with passengers fresh from the Orient, and eager to reach their destinations in Occidental ports, I suggest that you close this conversation and hasten to their assistance."

"One moment, Miss Amesbury," Felicity interrupted. "Your suggestion that Chance orders us to rescue the imperiled passengers at Raccoon Creek appeals to me strongly. This is the loveliest of spring mornings and why shouldn't we accompany Mr. Higgins in his pursuit of the Galloper?"

"A capital idea!" Miss Amesbury agreed. "As I own stock in half a dozen transportation companies it's well for me to familiarize myself with the best

methods of railway management; and this person holds so many high positions in the B. H. & O. we can doubtless learn much from him. Let us go forward at once."

The old man declared that he wouldn't budge until their suit-cases had been placed in the wheelbarrow.

"It's this way," he explained, giving a hitch to his faded blue overalls, "you gotta ticket and they'd hev to check them bags if you asked 'em. Bein' as you prefer walkin' to waitin' round here for the Galloper, I reckon the road's got to carry your plunder on any rollin' stock that comes along, and ef that wheelbarry aint rollin' stock, I'm a flabbergasted monkey-wrench. Then ag'in, I clean forgot to mention that the boss app'inted me General Passenger Agent when we wuz fishin' down at the crick, and that fetches ye into my jurisdiction."

"That proves your president to be a man of the most generous impulses," remarked Miss Amesbury. "The railroad presidents I have known have rarely been distinguished for generosity, so I look forward with the liveliest interest to meeting the president of the B. H. & O. What, may I ask, is this gentleman's name?"

"Michael P. Quinn, cadet of an ancient Irish house. That's the way he allus says it. Then he winks and says his ancestors fought up to their years in blood in all the wars fer Irish freedom, and he's goin' to build monuments to 'em at all the whistlin' posts from Brossville clean to Pekin. Funny cuss, that Quinn, —cheerful and keardless like, and joshes the deppities that's allus pesterin' 'im; and when the jedge o' the United States Court was here he give 'im a party in his private car and the jedge 'most died laughin'."

"Then I assume that Mr. Quinn lives in considerable state, if he has a private car and entertains federal judges."

Higgins chuckled.

"There aint nothin' small about Quinn. Michael P.'s all right. All aboard!"

With this they set off down the track. At the edge of the town, Higgins paused and demanded their tickets.

STOP LOOK LISTEN
AND HEAR THE BLUE BIRDS SING!

SOMNAMBULISTS
BEWARE!

WALKING AND SLEEPING
ON THE TRACK
FORBIDDEN.



They reached a crossing where a variety of legends were nailed to a dead tree, and Miss Amesbury inspected the admonitions carefully.

"You ask for tickets when we're walkin'!" Miss Amesbury exclaimed. "You will pardon me, Mr. Higgins, but I see no justice in that demand, particularly when the pressure of our feet on this miserable road-bed cannot fail to improve its condition."

"That aint no argyment," said Higgins. "You're travelin' over the road just as chipper as though you was layin' back in a palace car, and your baggage is bein' toted free on yer tickets."

"I think the law would support Mr. Higgins' position," said Felicity; and the tickets were thereupon surrendered. Higgins bit the corners off and placed them carefully in his hat.

They reached a crossing where a variety of legends were nailed to a dead tree, and Miss Amesbury inspected these admonitions carefully:

Stop! Look! Listen!
And Hear the Bluebirds Sing!
Sonnambulists Beware!
Walking and Sleeping on Track
Forbidden.

"The signs along this road are alone worth the trouble of a trip from Boston," declared Miss Amesbury, hiding a smile as Felicity laughed aloud.

"Here," said Higgins, as they approached a decrepit platform attached to a tumble-down shed, "is Little Anxious, where they built a hotel round a mineral spring once, and had to collect the fire insurance to pay the debts. The president says he's goin' to change the name from Little Anxious to Clean Busted. Right here's the county line between Boss and Tinker counties, and there's a deppity sheriff asleep under that slippery ellum."

He dropped the barrow and crossed the right of way to the sleeping man and kicked him gently in the ribs.

"Mornin', Hiram," said Higgins. "Ef you want to levy on somethin' and hev yer papers all straight, go on and levy."

"Will you kindly explain this absurd delay," called Miss Amesbury from the track.

"He's waitin' fer the Galloper so he kin levy on 'er. He levies every time she comes along. It's a habit with Hiram."

"I warn you solemnly against blockin' this road!" exclaimed Felicity. "There are three stamped postcards in my suit-case addressed to friends in Worcester, and they constitute mail matter within the meaning of the statutes. You are liable to fine and imprisonment for interfering with the transportation of the mails!"

This statement, uttered in vigorous tones and with flushed cheeks that spoke for extreme indignation, staggered the deputy for a moment. Miss Amesbury beamed upon her secretary approvingly.

"Mebbe yer right, but there aint no 'U. S. Post-office' painted on that wheelbarry," said the deputy.

"Reckon he's got us on that p'int," said Higgins, gloomily.

"We'll assume that he has," Miss Amesbury retorted; "but may I ask the amount of the claim represented by this outrageous writ you are sent here to serve on the rolling stock of the B. H. & O.?"

The deputy grinned and showed her a crumpled official paper.

"That's fer the president's last winter's laundry bill on a suit by Hannah B. Riley of Hinkleville, as fine a lady as there is in the country and a derservin' widdy woman besides. Jedgment's fer four dollars and eighteen cents, includin' costs—the odd cents bein' fer sewin' buttons on the president's shirts, and a just claim, as was proved at the hearin'."

"While we loiter here," cried Miss Amesbury, now thoroughly aroused, "discussing a contemptible laundry bill against the president of this road, the Galloper is hanging in imminent peril of destruction over Raccoon Creek. Here is a five-dollar bill, in full payment of Mrs. Riley's claim, and you may keep the change and hand it to the judge of the Tinker Circuit Court with my compliments."

The deputy stared at her incredulously, accepted the bill sheepishly and handed her the writ, after scrawling "Received payment" across the face of it. He thereupon retired to the slippery elm and resumed his slumber.

"I believe that man to be an impostor," Miss Amesbury confided to

Felicity as they again set off behind Higgins and the wheelbarrow. "and I doubt whether any such person as Hannah B. Riley ever existed. You will make a note of this incident."

"On the other hand," said Felicity as she drew the note-book from her pocket. "that writ seemed to be in proper form, and you were lucky to get rid of him so easily. Mr. Crosby had a case just like that, only it was for a million dollars, against a traction line in Maine, and he had to carry it clear up to the Supreme Court of the United States before he could shake it off."

"I'm relieved to hear that, and I shall ask Ashfield Crosby to furnish me with a copy of his brief in that case. Several justices of the Supreme Court are old personal friends and I shall examine the opinion in that Maine case to see whether it covers Mrs. Riley's claim. As a stockholder in the B. H. & O. it is my duty to establish indisputably whether or not the rolling stock on a through line to China can be seized to satisfy a bill for washing, and sewing buttons on shirts, for an official of the company. I shall make a thorough investigation of the habits of the president; and if graft is responsible for the apparent gross inefficiency of the road I shall exercise my rights as a foreign stockholder to bring suit for a receiver in the federal court of this commonwealth."

Higgins, trudging along silently with his pipe clutched in his teeth, wheeled round scornfully.

"You git a receiver! They've been tryin' for three years to git a receiver for the B. H. & O. and aint got nowhere yit. I aint sayin'." he continued, taking advantage of the delay to clean his pipe, "that ye couldn't git it, but I'm sayin' that the best lawyers in New York, not to speak o' Chicago, aint got nowhere with that propisition. When the jedge o' th' United States Court fer this dess-strict came down fishin' and walked over the road he said it would be 'crool and onusual punishment as pervided in the Constitution to app'int a receiver and make 'im give bond. I dug bait fer 'im and I know what he said."

"A sensible man," averred Miss Amesbury, "and the fact that any judge was smart enough to think of as good a reason as that for not turning this through line to the Flowery Kingdom over to a receiver, at a high salary and scandalous court costs, increases my respect for the federal judiciary."

"What was that?" cried Felicity as a faint, shrill pipe, as from a penny whistle, was heard in the distance.

"That's the Galloper, all right," said the delaying Higgins, "and she's got steam up. You kin see the Raccoon bridge now through them trees."

"It's the S. O. S. signal; undoubtedly their boiler is about to blow up!" Miss Amesbury declared emphatically. "Felicity, we must not lose another instant." And ignoring the pointing of Higgins' clay pipe, she grasped the handles of the wheelbarrow and started off at a trot.

The concluding half of "THE RESCUE OF MICHAEL P. QUINN" will be in the August Red Book, on the news-stands July 23. In it Miss Amesbury and Felicity meet Mr. Quinn himself, and not only have adventures but a romance as well.

East of Suez

By Lieut. Hugh
Johnson, U. S. A.

ILLUSTRATED BY DAN SAYRE GROESBECK

HUGH JOHNSON, the officer in our military service who has given us such wonderful word-pictures of life in the Philippines, brought back this remarkable story of the strangest human triangle ever enacted. You remember the fame-making stories of post life that Kipling brought out of India? Well, this is a "plain tale" from our own Far Eastern "hills."

WHEN Keating with his company of brown constabulary came down to assume the direction of civic affairs at Santo Tomas, Government sent with him Maestro Edward Federmuss, of the Philippines Department of Education, and Federmuss brought a wife. Keating well knew what it means to be shut up at an out station with only two or three white people, and he took as much interest in his companions as, as a matter of fact, he ever took in anyone.

Federmuss was a slight man, well coned in what he termed "the common branches," a learning upon which he prided himself beyond reason. He could and would detect an "It is me" across ten feet of deck space—and he usually corrected it.

His wife was a round-eyed woman whose face was forever upturned to her intellectual tyrant in a bird-like pose of expectancy. Her views on all subjects were neatly expressed by a two word addendum to the sun of her husband's opinions: "Yes, dear." Federmuss' smug boast, "Ten years of conjugal felicity without a single quarrel," was perfectly

redundant to one who knew his wife.

The chugging little steamer slid over the bar with a great boiling and up-churning of yellow mud, and the station of Santo Tomas was disclosed, cupped in a background of swart mountains. Along the estuary, stilted huts of the fisher-people stood out on crazy pilings. From a distant dug-out crew, standing and bending, black in the distance, came the monotone of their rowing chant.

"How truly Oriental!" pronounced Mr. Federmuss. "How inspiring and beautiful those hills! Behold your future home, my dear."

"Yes, dear." And though the faintest flicker of disappointment flitted across the face of the teacher's wife, her husband had said that the hills were inspiring and that settled it for her. They are not inspiring. Their suggestion is unpleasant, their cast of color too dark.

The new American residents found one white man, George Cole-Woodward, an Englishman representing the Singapore Trading Company, who took them in and made them as comfortable as his few possessions permitted.

Keating established his company, and Federmuss his school. Keating could never consider the school a success. The attendance was enforced, and the brown children sat under their pedantic master in a sort of wooden-faced awe, as he paced back and forth precisely pronouncing words:

"C-a-t — cat-tah.
D-o-g — dog-guh—"

But Keating was profoundly absorbed in his own affairs. On a bamboo table in his neat and simply furnished room was the photograph of a girl. It portrayed an intelligent face with wide-open eyes, that seemed to be frankly considering the observer, and that not without a restrained twinkle of amusement. The picture was of Keating's sweetheart, and the look was for him alone—old Ned and his soldier hobby, his persistent and unnecessary life in an outlandish place and among unheard-of people; but for all that, old Ned unreservedly approved and deeply loved.

Keating could not have told who suggested the plan of her coming to Santo Tomas to marry him. The girl knew keenly enough. She had hinted that perhaps it would be better for him to come back to his own proper home and his father's business, and leave a land that made the hair desert the top of his head and that yellowed his complexion

(goodness knows what it might do to hers), and Keating read these hints in sublime ignorance of their existence.

"I think you'll like the place," he wrote. "It's a great life, and there's some swinging society in Manila." Which was about as near as he ever came to description.



Federmuss was upon him like a starved tiger. "That's my wife—do you understand? You—you—leper!"

Mrs. Federmuss was of some use to him. She could give excellent advice concerning the cost of servants, of dresses and house furnishings, and he spent a great deal of time talking to her.

Federmuss was delighted with his station; and his wife, as usual, acquiesced. One evening Keating had them to dinner with Woodward. The meal was over and Federmuss was petulantly wrangling with the Englishman on the veranda, while Keating sat on the steps obtaining data in domestic economy from Mrs. Federmuss.

"I can have all that sent down from Mamla," he said eagerly. "It'll be a great surprise to her. She thinks she'll have to live like a Hottentot. You don't miss the home things, I think. You get used to the life."

Out in the yard, a million clustered fireflies lighted up a single tree with tiny glowing points and the moonlight tipped the fronds of the palms with silver; but for all its beauty, the darkness was sultry and palling. Mrs. Federmuss did not reply at once. Had Keating been given to observing such things, he would have seen that the roundness of her face was gone. He did note that her eyes seemed very tired, and that she spoke with a sigh.

"Yes," she said in her apologetic voice, "I suppose that's it—you *have* to get used to it."

Keating's pipe paused halfway to his mouth.

"So you mean," he puzzled, "that you don't like this—all this?" And his hand waved in a comprehensive gesture that included the amorphous mass of the mountains and the faint phosphorescence of the bay. "I thought you said six months ago that you loved it."

"Captain Keating," she answered with a weary intake of breath and a rebellious glance over her shoulder, "I *hate* it."

From the darkness of the veranda came Federmuss' precise tones:

"Tut-tut, Maria, complaining again? It's Santos Tomas you elect to dislike—not the life. You have more comforts, more help and leisure than I was ever able to give you before."

"She's right," interrupted Woodward's well modulated and, Keating

thought, ingratiating voice. "It's no place for a woman. You're beginning to tire now I think, poor lady. Hadn't we all best be going and let Keating compose his diurnal effusion. Eh, *Commandante*?"

And so Keating watched their three white backs glimmer and vanish in the moonlit dusk, Mrs. Federmuss leaning wearily on the nearest arm—which happened to be Woodward's—her husband stalking beside them. She seemed an inconsequent figure of ineffectual protest. Long after they had gone, Keating knocked the dottle of his pipe out against his boot-heel.

"I wonder about that fellow, Woodward," he mused. "I just wonder now."

One might imagine courage in a bunny rabbit, but no such quality in Mrs. Federmuss; and since she, like every soul in Santo Tomas, was, to an extent, Keating's charge, he set himself about consideration of the paradox.

The place was his bailiwick, his little kingdom; and he loved it. For him it meant authority, the ordering of many lives, the lure of East-of-Suez, a lure never yet felt by a woman. For the teacher's wife saw a huddle of grass huts, sordid and smoke-blackened; a tortuous muddy street with ditch pools where great truculent-eyed carabao drowns so deep in slime that only a moist nose, an oval of face and the span of their scaly horns showed; where bony hogs grunted among groups of uninspired, mud-paddling children; where bare-foot women, scantily clad, came bearing on their stately-held heads great bundles of grimy calico to pound and splatter on the washing stones. Fat, drowsy young men lolled in the shade, sucking cigarettes, staring at women, or wrangling in high, unrestrained gibberish over cock-fights. Old people of both sexes tottered along, or sat huddled over bamboo cartridges in which they mashed the paste of betel-nut that stained their lips and teeth. There was not a building in the town that one could not demolish with a club in a space of minutes, not an expression of the Caucasian conception of beauty beyond a few bunches of drying flowers on the flimsy altar in



A sergeant came up with a lantern. Beyond him was a circle of neck-craning natives. In the edge of the light-sphere stood the teacher, fully dressed.

front of the cracked tin crucifix in the church hut.

The season passed over Keating's head as ten such seasons had passed, and left him perhaps two years older in the space of one, but without complaint.

Mrs. Federmuss knew that the air was always either steaming with a hot dampness that covered everything with a fungous mold, or that, as the rains waned, the stream in the street died away, the jungle became dry, and finally sere and crackling. The broad leaves of the hemp hissed in the hot breath of the trade winds. Then the white dust became ankle deep in the street; it eddied in fierce little whirlwinds that sprang up unaccountably in the hot calm, and the morning winds swirled it along in stinging clouds.

But while Keating might have conceded the loss of her comfortable figure and the gray pastiness of her complexion to this, what could Santo Tomas have to do with those flashes of anger, now grown so common; with her rebellious protests at her fate, her life, her surroundings; with her constant whining of complaint?

The puzzle became more complex, and since Keating had decided that Santo Tomas was not responsible for this, he troubled sometimes with a theory concerning Woodward that seemed absurd. That the fastidious Englishman could find anything attractive in her was preposterous, and that prudish little she would incur the penalties promised by her puritanical upbringing for even the faintest flirtation was equally out of the question, even were he to suppose her freed from the domestic tyranny of her lord—a freedom that was by no means in fact.

It was his business to know what was toward in the teeming current of native life. Beside his company of uniformed constabulary, there were certain expressionless little men in the pay of the Insular Secret Service: innocuous houseboys, who pattered into his quarters after dark, half naked carters who stopped him in the street for their glibberish reports, Woodward's name sometimes came into these reports, and Keating knew what he knew of the English-

man's other, or under-surface life. It was not vastly different from that of many another white man alone in a tropical out-station, but it seemed to Keating to affect the man's right to spend so much of his time at the Federmuss *casa*.

He called there one night and found Woodward before him. Keating had come to consult Mrs. Federmuss on the final items of an order that was to go to Manila by the next boat and to bring back to Santo Tomas Bay an American home complete, to be set up in readiness for the mistress who was preparing to come out to it. But that talk was impossible. Federmuss seemed bent on provoking the arguments he raised with Woodward to a quarrel, though the most he was able to evoke was a tired, drawling.

"Oh I say, Federmuss," or, "Well truly, old fellow—" And Keating tried to divert this unpleasant trend to the subject that had brought him there.

"Why don't you think the new Mrs. Keating is going to like her station?" he asked his hostess.

"Do *you?*" she said, starting to rise. For a moment she seemed to sway unsteadily on her feet; then she laughed harshly:

"My God—*look at it!*"

Federmuss' chair clattered as he rose, pronouncing condemnation in the voice of doom:

"Maria—don't *swear!*" And he advanced angrily. Woodward too, his eyes searching the woman's face, stepped nearer her.

"Yes, I said 'My God,'" she said defiantly, "and I'll say it again: My God, My God, My God!" The swaying became more pronounced, and she began to crumple at the knees. Woodward gently caught and held her limp body. Federmuss was upon him like a starved tiger.

"That's my wife—do you understand? You—you—leper!"

Keating pulled him away and the woman raised her head and opened dazed eyes:

"What was—were you saying? I guess I'm a little sick."

"'Guess' and 'sick' are both inelegant,

Maria. Gentlemen, will you excuse us?" Mr. Federmuss had recovered himself with alacrity.

Keating went home in greater perplexity than ever. Humdrum Santo Tomas was taking on the attributes of the lip of a crater. People who, in the ordinary expectation, should have gone on with no more drama than exists in the laying of an egg, were shaping their courses toward tragedy, and Keating was being shaken from a cool soldierly observance into a part in a vital problem that, for the life of him, he could not comprehend.

A night's sleep, a morning almost cool, and a report concerning one Crispulo Cayanán, a drug-dazed veteran of the revolution, who intermittently threatened trouble, set him right again and gave him something else to think about. That night, he chuckled as he wrote:

So we have in our little social life here in Santos Tomas, a domestic triangle that will go further in keeping you amused than dessicated old I can ever...

It was late when Keating blotted and folded this letter. Eleven o'clock is almost day-after-to-morrow in Santo Tomas. He filled his pipe and leaned back to enjoy it. Then he sat up very straight. Out of the stillness and darkness sounded a pistol shot—a large-caliber-Navy's report, Keating thought; and then, after a pause of five seconds, came

three other shots in quick succession.

Keating, without hat or tunic, was on the veranda at the second shot. He saw the red stab made in the almost blue-black darkness by the flash of the third. He plunged down the street. Lights appeared in every tiny square window; the town awoke with a rustle and stir.

The shots had flared directly in front of the Federmuss *casa*; and there, beyond the puff-ball glow of the match he struck, he saw the white face of the teacher's wife. She was wringing her hands and her voice trailed out in an agonized monotone:

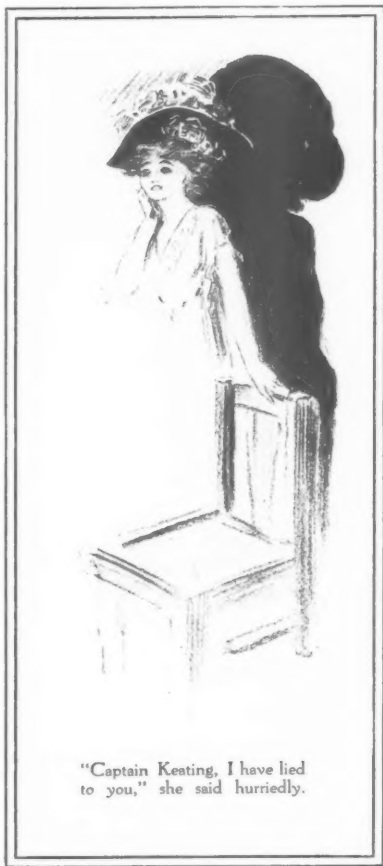
"Oh—no—no—no— He hasn't gone and done it. Oh, no—"

She seemed scarcely to see Keating, and she did not speak to him. She was looking at the ground at her feet. Keating followed her gaze, and his match went out.

He did not need it. There, in a huddled heap of white linen, grewsomely stained, the slender body of George Cole - Woodward, late of Derbyshire, England, was limp in its last repose.

Keating stooped down, but he scarcely saw what

he leaned over. His mind was a confused jumble of hints, memories, suspicions, unwelcome theories. He heard the shuffling of straw slippers through the sand, then the sound of wood clicking on metal and the high, excited voice of Maestro Federmuss, the habits of old time back upon it, acquired precision gone and forgotten.



"Captain Keating, I have lied to you," she said hurriedly.

"Hey! What's this? A revolver! God, it aint Woodward! What's happened?"

A sergeant came up with a lantern. Beyond him was a circle of neck-craning natives. In the edge of the light-sphere stood the teacher fully dressed. Limply in his hand he held a heavy Navy revolver.

A wave of unreasoning anger flooded Keating. He seized the trembling white man by the shoulders and shook him savagely.

"You pup!" he said. "You venomous, cowardly little cur! Here, give me that revolver."

But Federmuss did not hand it over. He dropped it as though it had been a brand of flame and retreated from it, covering his face. Keating retrieved it and released the cylinder.

"Where did you get this?" he asked. Instantly Federmuss became incoherent.

"Oh, I didn't do it—what d'ye think—*me* do such a thing! Oh my Heavenly Father! Oh, oh, Father, I never—*me* do that! Oh, Father, no—"

Something in the intense gaze the teacher's wife was bending on her husband made Keating turn to her. Her mumbled monotone of *no's* had ceased. Her cringing figure in its flowered kimono straightened.

"Where has your husband been in the last half hour?" asked Keating.

She was not quite prepared to answer.

"Oh, I don't know—" She paused as though to gather her nerves. "Oh yes, I do—at home in bed. He's just been at home in bed."

Keating did not need to glance at the collar and tie of the teacher to know that she was lying. He began instructing the Sergeant in the vernacular:

"Take charge, *Sargento*. Send for the hospital squad. Guard the Señor Maestro. Report to me in twenty minutes. Federmuss, you may remain at home for the present."

Keating's perspective of life had been rudely jumbled. If, in looking back as far as he could remember, he had been required to select from all the souls that he had known, trios who could have enacted what he had seen, when all, quite all, were grouped, there would have remained unsorted, transparent Wood-

ward, ineffectual Federmuss and his colorless wife.

When Keating reached home, two men were awaiting him; and bound, hand, foot and head, in a chair, a third sat glowering. Two hours passed before he had disposed of their reports, and at 3 A. M. he was awakened again. At his door, he found Mrs. Federmuss.

"I must see you, Captain Keating," she began, and though her voice was calm, it came in a richer timbre than he had ever heard it.

"One moment." And he fumbled for his tunic and lighted the student's lamp on the table. "Come—come in." Something in her appearance, as she stood hesitating in the doorway, caused him to stammer. Her cheeks were unusually flushed; blue crescents beneath her eyes seemed to enlarge them and to give her plain face a hectic, unpleasant beauty.

"Please come in and sit down," he repeated, and though she moved close to a chair, she placed her hand on its back, and remained standing. On that hand were rings—too many of them. The odor of some cheap Japanese perfume filled the room. She was fully dressed, and it struck Keating with a shock that she wore an evening gown and a large hat, profusely ornamented with red cloth roses. She avoided his eyes, and stood drawing a wrinkled handkerchief through her hands.

"Captain Keating, I have lied to you," she said hurriedly, in the voice of one speaking words learned by rote and wishing to make an end with great dispatch. "Now I am ready to tell the truth. It is bound to come out and I will tell it now. I lied when I said Mr. Federmuss was at home and in bed. He wasn't. He had gone out—he said—to make some calls on the *presidente* and the *padre*, though it was very late—" She paused again for a deliberate effort, and that effort was to smile, wickedly, knowingly, a piteous effort. The non-plused Keating was too puzzled to speak.

"G-Georgie Woodward and I had counted on that, *unfortunately*—most unfortunately, for Edward didn't go far on those *calls* of his." She stopped again to observe the effect of this sordid con-



"That," said Keating, "is Crispulo Cayanan. He had his—his grievance."

fession. Keating scarcely heard it. He was observing that the tense face in the close glow of the lamp had been painfully, though very crudely, made up. Cheeks, lips, and eyes were painted.

"We fooled you all, Georgie and I did—we fooled you, didn't we?"

Keating could only look at her in amazement.

"But Edward suspected all the time—you saw that he suspected. *Didn't* you see that he suspected?" The question came pleading for an affirmation.

"Now see here," said Keating, "I—"

"Don't interrupt me," she suddenly continued, breathlessly afraid he would contradict her. "Yes, Edward suspected. You saw that he did. He didn't go far on those—*calls*. Just into the shadow, to wait for George to come. Then I heard George whistling—" She checked her breathless rush of words for that same smile, and then a laugh, reminiscent, full of sin.

"But Edward was there—he was waiting—and—you know what happened. That's all, isn't it?" she was pleading again. "That's enough, isn't it? Oh, surely that's enough."

The key to the whole puzzle came to Keating. The sight of that poor, simple woman, garbed in her ridiculous conception of the habiliments of the sorry part she had deliberately assumed, and piteously pleading to be allowed to sacrifice herself for the life of her husband, almost wrung from him a sob.

"It's enough, I suppose," he said slowly, "to clear your husband on his trial."

Her face relaxed before she realized the meaning of his answer.

"Oh, then may I go?"

"Well I—not yet, Mrs. Federmuss—wont you be seated?"

"I'd rather not."

"Of course, as you say, this should be enough to clear your husband. Have you

thought how it will affect you—to have this known?"

Her voice showed signs of failing.

"I have thought of all that."

"You will be blamed for the whole thing. They'll deport you from your own country as—as an—'undesirable'—send you to Hong Kong—Singapore—and there you'll drift. I wonder if you know where."

Once more her lips forced that smile, though her face blanched:

"I know about that. I've read about it—I mean. Yes, I know—"

"The news will be cabled home to-day. No one, not even your mother, will send you a cent, much less a word, to help you."

"Oh, we manage—we women like me; we manage, Captain—"

Keating shaded his eyes with his hands and shook his head.

"Mrs. Federmuss—how can you come here and tell me this?"

The life seemed to desert her face.

"Oh, don't ask me questions. I—Haven't I done enough? Don't I stand ready to do enough? Can't you do something, if it's only to let me go on? Please let me go."

"Did your husband say he shot Woodward?" The hidden well of endurance that she, by some miracle, had uncovered, was nearly exhausted, but she said:

"Certainly he denies it. There can't be any question of that. He kept suspecting and suspecting—you saw that—you did, didn't you?"

"My dear woman," said Keating gently, "I know that you have never spoken a word to George Woodward in your life that your husband couldn't have

heard, and few enough that he didn't hear—that what you have come here to tell me is impossible."

She held out pleading arms to him, but he checked her, and stepping to a side door, opened it. It disclosed a little ante-room, where a linen-clad secret service man, carbine across squatted knees, sat in front of a chair. A cocoa-oil lamp, burning in a shell, threw a smoky, flickering light over the shoulders and wicked face of an old Tagalog, whose eyes glowered at them above the white bandage that held his head to the chair-back and silenced him.

"That," said Keating, "is Crispulo Cayanan. He had his—his grievance, and, after eluding two of my men who knew that he had stolen the revolver that your husband picked up in front of your house, and that he was threatening trouble, this man shot Cole-Woodward, where we found him."

Some hidden, tautened strand snapped, and back into the commonplace dropped Mrs. Federmuss. She sank into a chair sobbing audibly and without restraint.

"Oh, now—what will you think—of me? *What will Edward think?* Oh, Edward won't like this—Edward won't like this at all. He'll not understand—"

"No," said Keating, clumsily patting her back in the only panacea he knew for weeping humanity, "he won't understand. *But—*" he added grimly, "he'll understand one thing when I get through with him. He's going home on the next transport. And so are you. And so"—his eyes sought the face of the girl in the picture earnestly—"and so, *thank God*, am I. Those are things we are all going to understand."

A MAN BORN TO BE HANGED CANNOT BE DROWNED

So says that brilliant writing man, Arthur C. Train, in beginning his joyously humorous story,

"KELLY, THE UNSINKABLE"

in the August Red Book Magazine—an issue which will contain the work of

**THE GREATEST LIST OF FICTION WRITERS
EVER ASSEMBLED IN ONE MAGAZINE.**

A Companion For Mme. Gracee

By Ida M. Evans

Author of "Mud Puddles," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT A. GRAEF

MISS EVANS knows millinery from A to Z. That is one reason why her stories laid in millinery factories and shops won immediate fame for her. But the big reason is that she knows human nature. She has never shown this better than in this, a story of two girls whose friendship was of glove-and-cold-cream-lending steadfastness, until a certain man came into their lives.

MISS JULYANA HANEY, head trimmer at Mme. Gracee's fashionable hattery on Lincoln Avenue, clattered down the cocoa-matted corridor of Mrs. Veerhop's genteel rooming-house with a noise of clatterings not at all indicative of good taste or Christian feeling, considering that the hour was six-twelve A. M. and that Mrs. Veerhop's lady and gentleman roomers were enjoying that last delightful drowse which cuddles your senses just between the minute you ought to get up and the minute you absolutely have to sprawl out or be docked for being late.

Julyana was in that public-be-damned humor which reckes not of other folks' comfort. And though at present her relations with the respectable but waspishly unlovely Mrs. Veerhop were as smooth as the worn cocoa matting, memory viciously harked back to an evening the week previous when a late incoming to the caroled accompaniment of "Oh, You Great Big Beautiful Doll" had drawn forth a wrathful protest. At the time, Julyana had placated the outraged landlady with soft words of apology. At the time, Julyana had loved all the

world, and her unthinking carol had been but a tender echo of Waddy Jask's tender tenor apostrophe as he handed her out of the taxi a moment before.

Now, she caroled untenderly, with a loud abandon, like a trombonist determined to show the world how much noise he can make when he feels noisy. And as she came opposite the closed door of the side front bed-room of the second floor, her chic black satin French heels pegged the cocoa matting more clatterishly, and her clear contralto rose with the glad vigor of great joy, "O-oh, you g-gre-at big-g beau-oo—"

From the open transom of that side front bed-room, there came instant response in the sound of a lithe body scrambling from under bedclothes. Two bare feet hit the floor—and the dull double thump seemed to reverberate with petulance. And there came a murmur over the transom, in a young soprano voice, not distinct, but having to do with the utter lack of consideration that some folks had for the other folks.

Miss Hanecy shrugged her green-velveted shoulders. Miss Hanecy's handsome red lips said "Huh!" Miss Hanecy's handsome cream-hued face fairly

bulged with disdain. Manifestly, Miss Hanecy was not ill-pleased that she had annoyed the young woman on the other side of that door. Her handsome dark-blue eyes looked coldly at that door—as though they looked clear through at the drowsy, wrathful, white night-gowned figure on the other side. "Beau-utiful dol-l—" she caroled lightly until the front door clanged behind her.

Then, with no one to observe or hear, melody and disdain were no more. In somber silence she walked down the white-scrubbed steps and up the street.



Her clear contralto rose with the glad vigor of great joy. "O-oh, you g-g-e-at big-g beau-oo—"

At the corner, Julyana Hanecy looked somberly back—in time to see a yellow head and white-clad shoulders jerk away from the Nottingham curtains of Mrs. Veerhop's second-floor side front window. Yellow hair and white shoulders belonged to Sallie Peterson, head saleslady at Mme. Gracee's. Sallie was peeking after Miss. Hanecy.

Miss Hanecy's own black head flung coldly around. Miss Hanecy's handsome creamy chin elevated itself to an altitude conceded, since earth's hills were young, to be scorn's own trademark.

"Nasty, hateful, designing, despicable, deceitful little cat!" Miss Hanecy ripped forth the belittling adjectives as extravagantly as she slashed off velvet and chiffon. And that was considerable extravagance, if you asked Mme. Gracee, who watched her with mingled horror and content. Horror at the waste of material; content, because after the shapely creamy fingers had extravagantly wasted and slashed and puckered and adjusted, the resulting concoctions sailed off Mme. Gracee's shelves like angel cake at a church supper, and Mme. Gracee's bank balance—in her bank book, Mme. Gracee was Mrs. Minnie Grady—went up faster than a hot balloon on a windy day. In the past, Mme. Gracee had hired trimmers who trimmed economically, and usually their sedate, economical-appearing hats stood in unsold rows long after trimmer and season had gone the way of last year's birds' nests.

But redundancy does not make for emphasis. Somehow the belittling adjectives rang flat. Julyana's handsome blue eyes held malevolence—but somehow they held an ache, too.

"To think that after all these years!" Indisputably Miss Hanecy's handsome red lower lip trembled. Then it stiffened to cast forth: "Little snake!"

Eight years before, in a dim, dirty hat-factory, Sallie Peterson, skinny, scared, gawky, not ten days from a bleak Dakota farm, sidled into a chair beside Julyana Hanecy, pudgy, scared, gawky, not two weeks from a sun-baked Kansas hamlet. Common plight and an instant shy liking united them. Together they

ate lunch, that first day and thereafter. Together they verified suspicions that the brown plush hat which had seemed good enough in Kansas and the blue felt brim which had won favorable mention in Dakota were as *passé* in Chicago as a poor decrepit plowhorse at a gathering of four cylinders and haughty sixes.

Together they mourned their countrifiedness; together they enviously eyed the sloppy, swagger, cheap girl who was designer. She got all of fourteen dollars a week. That was riches to them, who at piece work could get only four or five. To their eager young indiscriminating souls, she vaunted that citifiedness which was more precious than rubies and more to be desired than righteousness. Together they tried to twist stiff young Kansas and Dakota coifs into a similar swagger fluffiness. Together they mourned over the grotesque untidiness that was all their unskillful fingers could effect.

"We'll never look like anything but rubes," they sobbed into the same pillow.

Together they were dismayed at the poor returns of piece work and the greedy demands of landlady, street-car, meal-time and wardrobe. And somehow, because they were together, they managed to scotch that dismay with gaiety. Together they sampled every variety of two-dollar-a-week mattress, landlady, forewoman, manager, factory, face powder, coiffure, ham sandwich, cafeteria, silk stocking, thimble, bargain table and barette that the big city coldly showed them. Together they rushed through the toil of the busy season and together they skimmed through slack.

They shared one room until they could afford two. They shared clothes and cold cream. They shared admirers—until Waddy Jaks.

Once there had been a good-looking dark man, named Burney, who tagged after Julyana. He had money, brains, muscle and a tenor voice. "I like his looks," Sallie observed one night. Julyana's quick ears sensed a wishful undertone to the casual observation. And the next time Mr. Burney met her, he didn't. Sallie was there instead. Julyana had a headache.

Once Sallie found a reseda broadcloth dress. It was a broadcloth year, and a reseda season—end of a season, rather, when the millinery world had more wishes than dollars. And she found it tagged at a fraction of its worth. "I like it," said Julyana enthusiastically. And she added abstractedly, with a side glance toward a mirror that reflected her low-curling black pompadour. "Reseda is a lovely color."

Sallie instantly divined desire under the abstraction. Sallie instantly said: "I got it for you—honest, July! Reseda



A lithe body scrambled from under bedclothes. Two bare feet hit the floor with petulance.

goes awful with my tow head!"—thus libeling hair that had the sun-glistened tawiness of Dakota's own wheatfields. She forced Julyana to take it, and then started forth on another hard search for forty dollars worth of cloth and cut for fourteen.

Julyana early learned that Sallie was a shiftless beauty who blandly expected the morrow to look out for itself. So Julyana early formed the habit of laying away a ten-dollar bill, sure that Sallie's room rent would gape for it before the lean days of slack time puttered by. Sallie early found out that Julyana's ideas of economy were gnarled affairs. For instance, she would retrench on the necessities of life, such as violet talcum and satin pumps, to buy things you can easily get along without, like warm underwear and two helpings of mashed potatoes. So Sallie always laid in an extra jar of Puree's orange-flower pomade and two pairs of white silk hose, sure that Julyana would wail desperately for them before busy season fluttered its feathers for the full-enveloped flight.

Once when a millinery manager of thick, blue-white cheeks and fat, blood-blotted eyes, unexpectedly kissed the furious Sallie, it was Julyana whose clenched creamy fist shot into his flaccid accumulation of double chins.

Once when a peevish forewoman, tossed between a devil of a foreman above and a sea of recalcitrant helps below, refused to take Julyana's neuralgic headache as excuse for a bronze aigrette on a gray satin stewpan for which silver oak leaves were ordered, it was Sallie's scissors that first clattered to the floor. It was Sallie who stood up, red-checked, to storm: "Oh, *very* well! We intended to quit Saturday night anyway, and we can just as well go right now!"

Together they walked out. The following Sunday morning, over a late breakfast of cream patties, coffee warmed on a gas jet, and cheese straws, they read the want ad's and found:

Wanted: A stylish saleslady with the gift of gab; and also a capable trimmer whose fingers are greased for work. No slouches need apply, nor any young ladies that do their

dreaming daytimes. Good pay. Mme. Gracee, 815 Lincoln Ave. Take Belmont car.

"I never sold much," Sallie said doubtfully, "but I could make a bluff—"

"You've got the gab and the style," said Julyana thoughtfully. "I like the business-like way she talks,"—admiringly eyeing the ad'.

They sallied forth, found the Belmont car, and then Mme. Gracee's fashionable windows, palely elegant in café au lait pongee curtains. Mme. Gracee was a stately, crisp-tongued lady, whose large, unwieldy hips and shoulders were suppressed as much as possible by a black *crêpe de chine* gown.

Dakota and Kansas lay far in the past. Sallie and Julyana had acquired style, poise and acumen. Blandly they assured Mme. Gracee that what they jointly did not know about hats and folks who bought hats could be stamped on one point of an invisible hairpin. Mme. Gracee frankly stated that in the twenty-four years that she had run a retail store—or was it twenty-five since her dear husband, Thomas Grady, got run over by a cable car and left her nine hundred dollars insurance?—she had heard that same bland assurance from many milliners of many nations, complexions and creeds. And sometimes you couldn't, but more often you *could*, stamp what they knew on a needle's eye. And she didn't believe anything she couldn't see. Not even rheumatism, which some doctors now said wasn't rheumatism at all, but a state of mind. However, she was willing to let them show what they could do.

That was three years back. Together they learned that the crisp, stately, silk-gowned Mme. Gracee of public view was untidy, garrulous, fat Mrs. Grady in private. When unpowdered, her severe reddish face was oily. Before customers Mme. Gracee talked solemnly and rapturously of art. In her living-rooms, which were over the shop, Mrs. Grady was addicted to pancakes, flannelette kimonos, fried ham and Marian Harland's columns. But the girls learned to like her as she learned to like them, and everything was as smooth as a celluloid gooseberry till Waddy

Jasks strolled in one morning, to sell feathers to Mme. Gracee.

Waddy Jasks was an attractive young man of tailored tan tweed and dulcet vocal chords. And a theatre engagement that he promptly made with Julyana he promptly broke to make another with Sallie. And Sallie, when reproached, huffily advised Julyana to label her property if she didn't want to lose it!

Since then, Miss Hanecy and Miss Peterson had passed each other in aisle and on stairs and not even known, apparently, that the other was on earth. "Although," Julyana bitterly mused as she turned into the Homelike Café for breakfast, "if she'd come to me and said, 'Deary, he's the one and only for my eyesight,' I'd have turned him over to her quicker than you can jerk a shirring thread from a facing. But that under-handed way—Eggs, cakes and coffee."—to the waiter.

He brought the order, then hovered about. Presently the significant hovering bore fruit in query. "Your friend aint been with you for some time?"

"No," coldly admitted Miss Hanecy.

"She aint sick?"

"I don't think so."

Over the old, wrinkled face flitted a knowing smile. "Maybe she's married to that good-looking chap in tan clothes I saw her with one night."

Miss Hanecy pushed her platter of eggs at him. The push was a violent, angry action. "They're scrambled!"—hotly.

"Why, bless me, they are!" His apology was abject. He snatched them away. "How did I come to disremember that it's your friend who always takes 'em scrambled?"

With a gold and white poached delicacy, he ambled back. Miss Hanecy stirred it, salted it, peppered it, stirred it, then left without eating it.

Mme. Gracee, half out of a flannellette nightgown and half into a purple silk petticoat, was shooting back the bolt of the front door of the shop when Julyana approached. Two of the other girls, Lois and Manda, were standing outside with the patient air of having waited some time. Mme. Gracee's crowning glory, which was too black to be true,

hung limp, and was not combed in the elegant profusion of locks that it would display later.

"Mornin', girls," she gaped. "Every time I'm out after eleven, I can't help oversleeping. Lois,"—to the short freckled apprentice—"before you dust the shelves, you just gotta help me make a list of to-day's orders. Sallie come yet?"

Julyana, busy unpinning protecting white tissue from a green and white satin affair not finished the night before, did not seem to hear.

Mme. Gracee seldom waited for an answer, so it didn't matter. She continued, "Say, Julyana, get to work on a going-away hat for old Mrs. Godybilt, will you? She's going away to Des Moines, Iowa, and she wants people to know that she lives right in the cradle of style. Myself,"—chuckling, "I think that Lincoln Avenue, as a cradle, is shy two rockers. But I never spoil folks' illusions. White panne velvet brim, Sallie thought, and gold cloth Tam, with a soupçon of jet. Did Sallie explain—"

"No," said Julyana. Lois and Manda and Essie and Maud, who had just arrived, exchanged animated glances. Mme. Gracee didn't know yet how matters stood between the former friends, but they did.

"Well, here she comes, so she can tell you." And Mme. Gracee waddled up the stairs that led to her apartments above.

And when she waddled down five minutes later, she was ignorant that only the breathing of six girls had speared the silence. She came down without the nightgown, and a brassière overlapped the drawstring of the petticoat. Mme. Gracee discouragedly dropped her bare red arms. "Fasten the pesky thing, Lois," she besought. "I declare, I'm getting so fat that soon I can't wash the back of my neck. And, Manda,"—pleadingly, "just give me a bit of help with those top three buttons." She stuck out a broad foot encased in purple cotton stocking and purple suede boot. Mme. Gracee was business from head to toe. Shoes are in evidence. Therefore she bought the best. But how can a finical customer know what kind of stocking is under that nobby shoe? Mme. Gracee bought colored cotton, two-for-a-quarter.

It was by such astute discrimination that she had managed to possess herself of several lucrative flat buildings and to fill a safe deposit box with shares of substantial steel stock.

Manfully Lois and Manda bent forward. When they had breathlessly bent back, Mme. Gracee waddled upstairs for the next needed articles of garb. She returned with the black *crêpe de chine* which she always owned, buying another as soon as one showed signs of wear.

She waved Lois back. "No, deary, this is too complicated a job for your young fingers. You always twist me and the dress till I don't know whether I'm inside it or out. Julyana, I hate to bother you—and right when you've swirled that cloth-of-gold so stunning—but no one else can manipulate these pesky hooks and eyes, so if you'll—thanks! Now."—sighing gratefully, "I wont draw a free breath again till I get to bed to-night. Sallie, did you tell Julyana—"

Sallie interrupted vivaciously. "Oh, Mme. Gracee, was it jet or jade that Mrs. Godybilt suggested?"

Mme. Gracee pondered, her sharp, genial eyes on the hat that Julyana was draping. "I believe she said jade, Julyana."

Julyana laid back a jetty strip and pulled forth a knot of dull green. Lois and Manda exchanged admiring looks. Thus, skillfully, had Sallie and Julyana for ten days used their unconscious employer as a conversational medium to preserve the business and their dignity.

"I don't see how I come to think it was jet," Mme. Gracee meditated, "because now I remember that I thought at the time black was more tasty for the old soul than green. Not that either would make any difference. Did you ever notice that the women whose faces couldn't be helped or hurt by any combination of cloth or color ever put together, are always the fussiest? They're style-dyspeptics; nothing agrees with 'em, but they're bound to try everything. Sallie, I'll be rigged up for the day as soon as you fasten my collar again. It's broken loose; I believe my neck bulges in the night. And fasten my bracelet."

Sallie fastened the bracelet, also a green-gemmed barette, an opaline neck-

lace at three mosaic beauty pins. Down upon this brilliant and tasteful collection, Mme. Gracee cast a disparaging glance.

"Truck I despise," she confided gloomily to the work-room, "but when you're in the millinery business, you've simply got to tickle the eyes of the trade—just like, in an up-to-date restaurant, you've got to doll roast pork up in green leaves. If the trade thinks you're not selling enough buckram and Milan to plaster jewelry over yourself, why the trade will trot away to some one who can. Lordy, sometimes I think I'll sell out and take my tired old bones to a suburban cottage where I can slide from a striped flannel nightgown to a polka-dotted calico kimono and enjoy peace."

"And make us look for another pay-roll?" reproached Sallie, balancing a pinky froth of plisse on her tawny head, and frankly admiring the effect.

Mme. Gracee admired it, too. "Everything you put on," she gloated, "makes your dimples more dimply and your eyes more like black stars. Lordy, the poor deluded women that I've seen remark the effect of a hat on you, and then tear open their pocketbooks to buy it!" She chuckled; then she sniffed at Sallie's reproach. "I guess it wont be me that'll leave first!" She looked pointedly at Sallie and then just as pointedly at Julyana. They looked hard at hats. "Just so either of you don't go off at a minute's notice, like one snippy, lippy trimmer did one season, and me almost buried under customers and orders! And the man she married—my dears, he was a shrimp! A perfumed, wide-nosed, duck-soled shrimp! Well, I was revenged."

She laughed, a genial, gentle old laugh that shook her shoulders till the *crêpe de chine* threatened to give way.

"But,"—very hastily, very contritely, "you girls mustn't think that I suppose all men are that kind. Some you can trust." Her sharp, genial old eyes went intently from Sallie's suddenly averted pink profile to Julyana's studiously lowered, handsome black lashes.

And then said Mme. Gracee, gently, almost apologetically, "Mr. Jasks is an agreeable young man, isn't he?"

There was silence that you could have scratched with the fleck of an eyelash.

"Don't you think so, Sallie?"

"Beg pardon? Oh, surely."—abstractedly. "D'ye know, that last mauve torpedo was sold yesterday? They go like

"Beg pardon? Oh—un-huh."—absently. "I'm sure it'll take tight squeezing. The orders I've got on hand!" And with a fervid show of industry, she buried her handsome creamy nose in white plush.

"Well, he cozened me into something I've never tumbled for yet," Mme. Gracee said amusedly. "Five boxes of coque feathers I let him unload on me, and coques this season are as unsalable as mosquitoes at Panama. But."—indulgently. "I guess it wont bankrupt me. And this is his first season with the firm, and he's anxious to show results."



"I wont draw a free breath again till I get to bed to-night."

fresh cherry pie at a summer resort hotel. And dear me, I must see—" Sallie pattered importantly into the salesroom.

"You like him all right, don't you, Julyana?" Mme. Gracee carelessly continued.

Mme. Gracee waddled to the door of the salesroom. "Sallie, Mr. Jasks told me a girl as pretty as you could sell colts to a garage. He almost."—laughing genially, "made me think I wasn't paying you enough!"

Julyana bent intently over her work. Pretty? For eight years she had loved that undeniable prettiness. Hating came hard. And composure came hard. Julyana was furious to feel her own handsome eyes get wetter than well-behaved eyes have any right to.

Manda industriously sewed bandeaux. Lois dusted a wall-case shining from two previous dustings. Maud thoughtlessly dumped together two boxes of stemless violets and crushed velvet grapes that she had been an hour sorting. For they were humane girls, and it made them uncomfortable to watch this limb-by-limb, sundering of a friendship that they had supposed was riveted with unrendable steel.

With the gloating pity that mourners use to recall the deceased's characteristic words and acts, they rehearsed Julyana's rush that first afternoon to get orders out of the way, anyhow, anyway, just so she could finish them by six o'clock in order to get to a hair dresser's by seven o'clock. And out of the corners of critical young eyes, Lois and Manda and Maud had opined that the tan-tweedled, tan-mustached, tan-shoed, taffy-tongued young feather salesman was worth even more flurry. Essie didn't; but she was in the throes of love's young dream over a lanky footpad of the films, so her judgment was biased.

The next day, Julyana had the sleepy eyes and sluggish fingers that follow a cabaret evening which lasts nearly till morning. Toward four o'clock she evinced that same reckless flurry. And the next day the shop knew, and she knew that the shop knew, that it had been uncalled for. And Sallie had the sleepy eyes and sluggishness.

"And I wish," Lois whimperingly whispered, "that they'd make up! Sallie took an order for a mandarin motorhood, and I thought she told me to tell Julyana to make up a mourning motorhood. And Sallie called me down, and Julyana called me down, and Mme. Gracee threatened to fire me!"

"Any time *they* make up!" foreboded Manda, who also roomed at Mrs. Veerhop's, and had been deputized by Julyana to carry back five hairpins (two shell, three wire), half a jar of cold

cream, a pair of worn white kid gloves and a chemise borrowed from Sallie; and had been deputized by Sallie to return to Julyana two hemstitched handkerchiefs, one piece of chamois redolent of lilac, one pearl bracelet and an eyebrow pencil. "Women'll wear tin tomato cans for hats first!" declared Manda.

And they did not make up.

Wardrobishly considered, friendship is often a veritable Scotch cape; it's outer hue of love is demure and seemly. Let the wind of circumstance toss the cloth, and there is revealed the glaring plaid of hate and jealousy and retaliation and fury.

And so for some days the atmosphere of the workroom was strained and indigoish and sulphuric and all the other things that an atmosphere is when two people are insolently, hatefully silent, and the remainder is fearfully, expectantly silent.

Mr. Jasks wandered in several times. Then he seemed to sense the discomfort, and he kept away. Even Mme. Gracee, though no one told her, became aware that something was wrong. And though she was a capable old lady, she evidently judged this too serious to meddle with. She went around with a worried, pondering look and took to closing the shop early.

Finally she timidly asked them both to stay a few minutes one night after the other girls went. She wanted to consult them—

"Sorry," crisped Sallie. "Can't. I have an engagement and I must hurry home to dress." Her soprano voice was icily important.

Mme. Gracee turned appealingly to Julyana. "You, deary—"

"Can't," said Julyana coldly. "Have an engagement, and the aigrettes on my gold-lace coop are loose." She made a great show of gathering up scattered material.

Sallie turned away—and laughed. "The engagements some people have got!" she said to Manda. It was a sneer.

Whereupon Julyana laughed. "And the engagements other people have got!" she sneered to Lois.

"Girls!" cried Mme. Gracee wonderingly.

The girls stalked out, and though they rode to Mrs. Veerhop's rooming house on the some street car, they were farther apart than last season's styles and those of the next. Julyana, in her room on the third floor, heard Sallie, below on the second, scrambling furiously around in the haste-wasting way she had when she was late. Julyana sat on the edge of the bed, and took off her hat and gloves.

Presently she heard Sallie's clear young soprano cut down the hall.

"Manda, will you go over to the drug store and get me a jar of cold cream? I haven't a speck,"—agonizingly, "and my face is as rough as a lump of Pocahontas nut. And some benzine, too. I dropped carmine on my last clean pair of white gloves. And Heaven knows if I can get the stuff off."

"I s'pose," Manda ungraciously assented.

Involuntarily Julyana's eyes went to the top dresser drawer, where reposed three new white glacé pairs. From force of old, old habit, Julyana regretted that a white porcelain jar held only a smear of white aid to rough skins. Then Julyana remembered. She tossed her handsome chin haughtily. "Sallie runs that poor girl to death," she observed into the green chiffon toque at which she was jabbing and rejabbing a hatpin.

"I'll drape your new peplum, Manda," Sallie coaxingly promised.

"I don't wonder at him," Julyana bitterly mused. "She could coax the stars away from the moon. It's *her* I blame. After all these years! And if she'd come to me and said—"

Next morning, Julyana's eyes were pinkish. Manda met her in the Home-like Café, and shrewdly remarked them.

But no one else seemed to. The work-room was too busy for a while, helping Mme. Gracee into a superb purple charmeuse—she had decided after much uttered meditation that the crêpe de chine was too shabby to submit longer to the critical trade—and after helping her, the work-room was too exhausted to be observant. And Sallie was too busy. For Mme. Gracee, after getting into the gown, went downtown to transact some

business that she explained had to be taken care of that morning. So that threw the entire burden of selling upon Sallie.

"Black panne, with ostrich band," she called in presently. Her voice was flustered. Telling nine women, all at one time, what they could and should and could not and should not wear, is not so easy as reciting the twenty-third psalm. For business is business, whether you are amiable or the reverse, and such telling must be suave, sweet, assuaging, decisive, diplomatic and dollar-coaxing in one and the same breath.

"Must be ready in two hours," Sallie called, "or not wanted."

Julyana heard, and laid down the peacock basket that she was overlapping with grouse wings. For business is business, whether or not the person who is speaking to you is on speaking terms with you.

And whether Julyana was spiteful or inattentive, no one knew. But in two hours Manda bore out a black panne hat banded with cute black lilies of the valley. The customer, a lean lady whose chin reached coyly up to commune with a nose that reached uncoily down and who had the disposition that goes with such featural combination, looked at it, looked at Manda, then flung the hat at Sallie. "I don't want it," she observed distinctly. Then she stalked out.

Sallie rushed back—and flung the hat at Julyana. "Why don't you do what you're told?"—wrathfully.

Julyana did not know that four favorite customers necessarily intrusted to Lois' and Maud's lukewarm oratory had snippily departed, and so further nettled the already nettled Sallie. Julyana flung the hat back—straight in Sallie's angry face! "I did!"—furiously. "Exactly!"

"You didn't!" cried Sallie. "I won't stay at a place where I work my head off to get an order and then can't get it made up—"

"I'm thinking of leaving myself!" choked Julyana. "A place where you can't get orders repeated straight—"

"You know what I think—"

"I don't care what you think!" Julyana snapped her fingers not an inch from Sallie's nose.



"Some women take to charity for amusement in their old age, and some collect fans, and some keep up cat shows, and I want to take an amiable, pleasant companion, even if he is a few years younger'n me, it's my own business!" And Mme. Gracee banged a jeweled red fist hard on the work table. "Aint it?" she demanded.

"You deliberately put lilies—"

"You deliberately said lilies—"

"Girls!" cried Mme. Gracee, who had hurried in. "What's the matter?"

"Order trimmed wrong," curtly snapped Sallie, glaring at Julyana.

"Order given wrong," declared Julyana, staring at Sallie.

"Oh, well,"—amiably, "mistakes will happen. Never mind. It'd take more than a botched order to bother me to-day. I got—I got something to tell you." She said it bashfully.

Sallie, frowning, turned indifferently away; Julyana fingered her scissors sullenly, as though uncertain whether to stay or go.

Mme. Gracee coughed gently. Then she coughed bashfully. And then she coughed kittenishly, and ordered everybody out of the room but Sallie and Julyana. The younger girls went reluctantly. And the two older girls remained reluctantly.

"I just got married to Mr. Jasks," said Mme. Gracee softly. "Now, girls,"—piteously, "don't look at me that way! Sallie! Julyana! I know I'm older than him! I know how foolish it is for me to take a young husband! I don't care, though!" Her voice rose belligerently. "*I do not care!*" I guess I've worked hard enough all these years and put away enough to afford a luxury of this kind if I want it! Aint I, Sallie? You can't say I haven't, Julyana!"

"I didn't say a word," gasped Julyana.

"I congratulate hi—you," came faintly from Sallie.

Like a ruffled hen, Mme. Gracee plumed her spirits, and smirked—a wistful, pleading old smirk that Sallie and Julyana hastened to look away from.

"And I don't think—I'm sure he aint marrying me for my money," she declared. "I know he's not got a business knack,"—it was the apologetic tone of one who loves and knows but does not mind the loved one's deficiencies—"but I don't care. Lots of men haven't. And I make enough for him and me. Some women take to charity for amusement in their old age, and some collect fans,

and some keep up cat shows, and if I want to take an amiable, pleasant companion, even if he is a few years younger'n me, it's my own business!" And Mme. Gracee banged a jeweled red fist hard on the work table!

"Aint it?" she demanded.

Mechanically Sallie reached for Julyana's black silk thread, which the banging caused to bounce off. Julyana stole a nervous, pitying look at her. Poor, deserted Sallie! Julyana's heart ached and burned. That mercenary Jasks!

"But you girls don't think I've made a mistake, do you?" Mme. Gracee pleaded. "I was going to consult you last night—but you didn't have time,"—they gulped regretfully—"and you both do like him, don't you? You both said you did!"

Sallie had dropped weakly into a chair. She hitched the chair nearer Julyana. Julyana leaned her handsome creamy chin in her palm. It was the palm nearest Sallie. "'Course we like him," they declared. "And sure you're not foolish," they lied in polite concert.

The 'phone rang. Mme. Gracee waddled happily to it. "Yes, Waddy. I'll meet you wherever you say."

"You're not heartbroken, July?" Sallie's hand slid over Julyana's.

"Me?"—in surprise. "No. But you?" Her fingers curled up to Sallie's.

"Hasn't he been taking you out this week?"

"Where were you last night, Sallie Peterson?"

"At five nickel shows! And, July, the other day I met a Mr. Burney that we used to know a long time ago. He's got a swell friend. I promised we'd meet 'em the first free night *you* had—I couldn't say we weren't speaking to each other,"—giggling.

"Remind me on the way home to-night to get a jar of cold cream," Julyana besought. "I haven't touched my complexion for a week."

"I got a full jar," said Sallie. "But don't let me forget to send Lois out this afternoon for fresh gloves."

"Sallie, I got three clean pair. What kind of a man is his friend?"

Jane and the Rudder—

AN EPISODE OF FLOOD-TIME
ON THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER

THERE are few factors in the success of The Red Book's determination to print far and away the best fiction of the time which give us the pleasure or the pride that we take in this; that Opie Read, the best loved writer in America, has chosen our publication as the one through which he will give his new work to the public. We were fairly flooded with appreciation for "Ice Water



A FLOOD on the Mississippi, moonlight, an old tub of a steamboat churning in an attempt to beat the current; a tall, dark-haired fellow talking to the captain:

"Who is she?"

"The daughter of Judge Blake, planter in Mississippi," the captain answered. "Ever hear of him?"

"I should think I have. She's beautiful. Look at her as she sits there, trying to be ungraceful out of mischievous spite against man, and unable to accomplish so difficult a feat. Don't think I ever saw such unconscious animal perfection, even in a leopard."

The captain laughed. "If you feel that way about it I'll introduce you."

"No—no thank you," the young man was quick to respond. "The fact is, I don't want her to know my name. But I wouldn't want a more pleasurable assignment than to stand here and to gaze at her all night."

"When you might be talking to her?"

"Such women are not to talk to—except as they give to us the sensuous music of their voices. They have no ideas—no idealism."

"As to that, I don't know," said the captain. "But I think she'd surprise you. She's the belle of her neighborhood; and besides that, her father tells me she's writing a book."

"Good Lord," escaped from the young man in a deploring gasp... "Eh, look at that posture. Did you ever see conscious awkwardness so

A New Story by Opie Read

DECORATIONS BY
GRANT T. REYNARD

Johnny," which appeared in the March issue. Here is a story which is even more of Mr. Read's old style—for instance, that description of the dawn, on page 471, is one of the most delightful passages of English you have seen in years. And we know you will be pleased that more of his stories are coming. "Crossing the Line," which will appear in the August issue, is the next one.

unconsciously graceful? Hang it, she's going away."

"As she is your only fellow passenger, you'd better let me introduce you."

"No, thank you."

The young woman got up slowly, a tulip arising out of its bed, and walked astern, the young man following her with his eyes; and then he followed her with himself. But discreetly he hung away from her, keeping within the shadow as she stood in the moon-pour of light, her hands resting on the railing. Out over the great soft flash of water she looked, poised still, a dreamer in a moon-lighted dream. In the echo-less distance lay the dark woodland, flooded, and deserted by bird, not even an owl hooting its lonesomeness. Black shadows floated alongside the fluttering old tub, logs drifting down; and here and there a lurching swirl, caused by a break in a levee, far away on the outer skirts of the night.

The man drew cautiously nearer, enrapturedly to gaze; and then—an upheaval, a deafening clap of thunder, a shoot through the air, a fall, a deep and breathless submerge, the surface of chilling water, whirling visions and a confused consciousness that the old boat had exploded her boilers.

There were no cries, no noise, but a deathly stillness after that awful blurt; and the man, floundering in the swift tide, thought of the woman, saw her arise with the moonlight on her face, swam to her, gathered her



unto himself, pillowed her head on his side, swam with her, brutishly grateful that the old tub had gone up into the air; and then fell upon him a sore remorse: the girl might be dead. He knew that she could not be scalded, for the boilers were ahead; not drowned, he knew, but a timber might have struck her. And this thought made him shudder.

He swam with her, knowing not whither, touched something, a great log, and as best he could, heaved her, face downward, across it, steadying it to keep it from turning. She had shown no signs of life, and he felt about her mouth, but no water ran from it, and hope sang a song in his breast.

Down into the water he sank almost up to his neck, steadied her on the log, beseeching her to speak; and she spoke, in a dazed way; and his heart thrilled him so that he hardly had the strength to keep the log from turning.

"Where—where am I?" She struggled to get up higher on the log.

"You are here," he answered with a laugh, his soul tingling, the universe growing warm with his clasp of her, warm out of the chilling waves.

"Oh!" And then she realized, "But please go back and help the others. I can take care of myself now."

"There are no—no others. . . . Do you want me to go and leave you here alone?"

"No—no, please don't. . . . Oh, wasn't it an awful thing! Do you think many of them are dead?"

"If they are they don't know it."

"Please don't talk that way," she pleaded. . . . "How did you chance to find me?"

"Oh, happened to be swimming around and met you."

"Please don't make a joke of it." Now she sat on the log, her feet in the water, while he, with one arm over their treacherous craft, was almost submerged. "But why don't you get up higher?"

"Because I am the rudder. I keep your boat from turning over."

"Oh, how brave and generous you are," she cried; and the rudder replied, "Say that again."

"You are making fun of me," she whispered.

"It's not dry humor, at any rate."

"How can you joke at such a time, when people may be dead?"

"People have always been dead," the rudder laughed, "and they always will be, more or less; but we've got to joke, in order to live."

"I don't believe it. Life is not a joke. No, no—think of what we have passed through to-night—think of what we are still passing through, out—oh, what is to become of us? And I don't even know your name."

"My name is Smuggles."

"That's not a very pretty name, and I can't see whether it suits you or not."

"It does. Almost anybody can look at me and see my name."

"I wish you wouldn't make fun of me, and at such a time as this. You haven't any heart—none whatever. Oh, yes you have, I beg your pardon. You have saved my life. And you say your name is Smuggles. I didn't want to have my life saved by a man with such a name as that. I wanted to be saved by—"

"De Merton or St. Glouerson," he supplied.

"No, not exactly that, but you know how it is."

Then she began to weep, and with cause, for she said that her father would read of her death in the account of the disaster. Smuggles knew that she was right and he let her weep, the moon pouring upon her; and he said not a word, ruddering the log. But when he fancied that she had wept enough he said: "We'll send him a telegram."

Then she broke out at him, "Oh, how can you say anything so foolish, Mr.—"

"Smuggles."

"Yes—Mr. Smuggles. Oh, how can you, when you know that the river is miles and miles wide and that we are going to drown? Please don't mock me."

"You said just now that I had saved your life."

"Yes, you had then but not—not finally."

"And what your father wants is for your life to be saved finally. I understand. But it shall be saved finally. Miss— is your name Imogene?"

"No. What made you think that?"

"Nor Hortense?"

"No; how silly you are! My name is Jane."

"I don't believe it."

"But I tell you it is. I was named after my grandmother."

"Jane is a beautiful name," said the rudder.

"It is not, and you know it. . . . I wish I could see your face." Then she began to weep again, lamenting the fate of the tub. She knew that she and her brave rescuer were the only ones saved, and they were not saved, for all about them everywhere there were miles of water. She asked him why he could not be serious, and he answered her that he was, his teeth chattering. The May moon was mellow and across the flood was borne the scent of the wild crab-apple bloom, a yellow turmoil perfumed; and now a whippoorwill flew out over the waste and hoarsed his lover chant. In the divergent current the log sought to turn, but straight the rudder held it. With a wet handkerchief Jane was wiping her eyes.

"My poor father," she sighed.

"Mother passed on?" the rudder inquired.

"Yes. . . . This would have killed her."

"Then she is saved—I mean she is better off than some people that are still living."

He heard her sigh, and with a quick swirl and then a gradual cork-screw of his body, he steered to the right to avoid a heap of drift-wood. She wondered as to what time it was, and he looked at his watch, pouring water from it like an opened oyster, and told her that his time had given up its wet ghost at eleven-ten.

"And when daylight comes I wonder where we'll be," she mused aloud. He said he thought that they would be in the river, and she frowned at him, sitting high on the log, but he caught not the expression of her countenance. Suddenly she gave a cry. He lifted himself like a cat-fish hooked, and in faltering tones she told him that she had lost her hat.

"Why, that was to be expected," he said. "I've lost mine, too."

"But a man's hat doesn't make so much difference. I just know that when

I get out of here I'll look like a fright. . . . Oh, I have never been introduced to you, Mr. Smuggles; and my father is awfully conventional. He will think that our acquaintance is very irregular."

"But I think it perfectly natural, don't you?" the rudder spoke up.

"Under the circumstances, yes," she laughed, and the rudder thought that a silvery wave, broken loose from some Aegean Sea, had rippled across that yellow flood.

Now for a time they floated in silence. The moon went down and the yellow grew black, and the whippoorwill's song was hushed.

"You must have been dreaming," she said. "Why are you so silent?"

"I was giving you the chance to dream."

"Oh, I don't want to dream. I want to thank you for saving my life."

"But I haven't saved it yet."

"Don't you think so?" And he felt her clutching at his hand on the log.

"Well, practically saved. It is saved as long as you are alive. Let us feel that we are on an excursion."

Again she began to lament. "Captain Carnes was so kind to me, and now he's drowned. But do you really think he is, Mr. Smuggles?"

"Well, not having a chart of his movements and loitering places I can't say, but I can hope, and that's all life is, a prolonged hope."

She agreed with him. It is a whim of beauty sometimes to nod acquiescences to philosophy; the feminine thrillers of the court halted to give pink ear to the wisdom of home-spun Franklin.

Again they floated in a silence too dark for shadows, and then she asked: "What business are you in, Mr. Smuggles? I mean your profession."

She heard him softly laughing. "I used to be a poet," he said, "but I found the name of Smuggles did not fit in with my occupation. Then arose the necessity to change my name or my business, and finally, serious deliberation convinced me that I must not cast my name aside. Smuggles was one of the most honorable names in early Tennessee. My great-grandfather drove the first load of coon skins into Memphis, and stand-

ing high on his ox-cart he announced himself as a candidate for sheriff. Detraction defeated him; but his reward awaited him. He returned to England, established a coat-of-arms, a raccoon rampant cracking the shell of a crawfish, and died as yelper to the hounds of the king. So, instead of changing my name, I changed my occupation, and I now serve denatured buttermilk on a ferry boat."

"I don't believe a word of what you are saying, not a single word. Mr. Smuggles; but I know you are trying to be humorous to keep me from brooding, and I am thankful for it... Oh," she cried suddenly, "suppose an alligator should snap you?"

"Then you'd be minus a rudder. However, alligators don't attack human beings."

"That may be, but they aren't supposed to know in the dark."

"No, but they are pretty shrewd. However, I might get a strike from an alligator-gar."

"And would it hurt?"

"Well, it might take off a leg or so."

"Oh, and one of them might hit at my feet!"

"No, only to be lured by larger bait."

He could fancy that he heard her frown at him, and he waited a long time for her to say something, but she was silent. He could not see her, but she made the darkness graceful, and the silence was sweet, and the gurgling water was warm as he touched her hand. She moved it away from him, along the log, and he thought that he heard her fingers rippling music on the bark.

"When do you expect to have your book done," he inquired.

Out of the darkness above him came the startled cry, "What's that you said?"

He repeated it.

"How do you know I am writing a book?"

"The captain told me; and besides that, aren't all young ladies writing books?"

"No!" came down emphatically...

"The captain is a gossip. No, I don't mean that, for he might be drowned, poor man, but I wish he hadn't said that. I didn't want anybody to know."

She thought that she heard him chuckling, and she asked him if he were laughing at her, and up came his swift denial. "But do you know enough about the mechanism of a flying-machine to write a novel?" he inquired.

Quick was her comment: "It is presumptuous on your part to—insinuate that I have a flying-machine in my story. What put it into your head?"

"Nothing, only the fact that you've got to have one. The lovers escape in a flying-machine, don't they?"

"I'll never read another line to anybody in the world," she vowed. "I didn't want anyone to know about that. But if I cut out my flying-machine I ruin my story. You've got to have something in a story, haven't you?"

"Yes," he admitted, "a story ought to have something in it. Now for instance our story: we had to blow up a steamboat."

"Our story! I mean a love story," she said.

"And isn't this, our story, a love story?"

She flashed at him but he could not see her light: "It is not. You take advantage of my situation."

This was so true that in bowing to her rebuke he ducked his head below the surface, and out of the baptism it came with the grace of apology. "I beg your pardon; I didn't mean it that way. It is characteristic of our race that from even ourselves we hide ourselves with humor, a quality which Addison said was put upon man to keep him from becoming ridiculous."

Along the log he searched for the fingers that had played so thrillingly on the bark, but did not find them. Now there fell a dreaminess, as if her senses in this drowse hour of the dawn were seeking repose. And he said nothing, leaving her in her hush. The current swirled, and he knew that somewhere away off to the left there was a bad break in the levee, and he knew, too, that many a cabin had been deserted, that many a child had been grabbed up out of its cradle to be taken to the hills far beyond. There had been lapses of silence, and he knew that time was ageing, for now in the plumes of night

a feather was turning gray. Bullbats, bellowers of the dawn, flew from the East, musicing the spirit of a new day, and the night-hawk, with a glow on his wing, flew swiftly toward the still blackened West.

11

Jane spoke as if with sudden consciousness: "Oh, you must be nearly tired to death down there—"

"Ruddering," he supplied her. "No, not nearly tired to death; still, I'd rather have solid substance beneath my feet so that I might walk awhile. The sky is clear and the sun will soon be up. It's coming now. See those glinted ripples, like a school of gold-fish playing."

She laughed, her buoyant youth claiming kinship with the young morn. "To talk that way, and yet have me believe that you peddle buttermilk! I don't believe it."

"No? But a man might have a poetic glimpse and still be a useful citizen."

"I don't believe you're a—"

"Useful citizen?" he broke in. "Perhaps not, but I have been thinking of changing my occupation: I have thought of taking up cat-fish. The trout was anciently extolled, the perch accepted on its doubtful merit, the mackerel recognized at court, but the cat-fish, for want of proper exploitation, has never come into its own. I am going to be its press-agent."

Toward him she turned her face, smiling, the rising sun playing upon her cheek, and he tingled in the water, knowing that never even in a June night's dream had he beheld a vision so beautiful: and in pure joy he laughed aloud, the exultant cry of an artist soul viewing upon the canvas of his mind a sudden creation which time should make immortal. She turned slowly from him and then came her cry, "Oh, a house!"

As best he could he drew himself up, but dropped back instantly, for the swiftness of the current threatened to turn the log; but in that instant's glimpse he had visioned the house like a cinematograph; and now, back shoulder deep, he reviewed it, knew that it was a fish-

ing lodge, on a low island. His struggle was now to fight the swiftly dividing current and to land his craft on the sand. The fight was hard. The log turned doggedly to the left, then to the right, but he slid back to the far end, punting with his sides, his legs; and then came a joyous shock; the log had struck. She sprang into the shallow water, and after her he splashed, and together they stood laughing on land.

"Jane, I invite you to breakfast."

"You invite me to a rehearsal of your mockery."

"No, to actual breakfast. Hark thee." And playfully he caught her by the wrist. "A sudden headwater warned the spoon-casting—"

"Oh, I wish you would be sensible." She pulled away from him.

"Goddess of the swift and yellow deep, I am as sensible as the thrill of the occasion permits me to be. What I am trying to say is this: those fishermen got away from here suddenly and left their grub. Come with me."

He reached for her hand, with none too graceful a play of carelessness, but she would not suffer him to lead her, though she hipped him close as they strode toward the lodge, a low log building amid sprouts of cottonwood. It was not only a mere haven, but a refuge clean and commodious, finished in scented pine, with a ticking clock on a mantle shelf, above a broad fire-place. In a corner lay a heap of dry brushwood and a fire still smoldered, murmuring. There was a table and in the center of it the half of a boiled ham, bread, ginger-snaps, preserves.

Jane gleed her delight, but deceitful Smuggles viewed it all as a matter of sapient expectancy.

"Let me prepare the breakfast for you," he said. "In yon cupboard there is coffee, I know, and—but first let me roar the fire with a welcome for two wet."—he looked at her, radiant in the sun that streamed through a window—"for a wet heroine and her rudder."

"For a brave man and the woman he saved."

On the fire he heaped the brushwood till the chimney roared. The coffee-pot on the edge of the flame, down amid the

ashing coals, simmeringly gossiped of the ancient South when gold cloths floated from barges on the James, and when to music the Virginian backwoods belle gossiped of the court of England's second Charles. And then they sat to breakfast. She poured his coffee for him, smiling over the cup, and the poet within him listened as if to the hounds baying the Albermarle fox.

"I think this is right cute," she said; and the poet within him rose in rebellion, but he looked at her and saw that she was fighting against the softness beaming from her own eyes.

"Yes, beats on a log... Now we'll dry out." The flames leaped and they sat by the fire.

"Oh," she cried, "the clock has stopped."

"Yes," he said, laughing, "On this little hump of land time dies. There must be no time here."

"Foolish. And yet, Mr. Smuggles, you say you are a business man."

"Yes, I am, but I dream. The discovery of America was a dream, but it was business. The rudder of the ship is the tongue that has ever talked poetry—talked Shakespeare—and yet the rudder of the ship talked business. Put out your feet and let your stockings dry. Everything is a dream. You are a dream."

"I am not, Maurice says I am a thrilling reality."

Quickly he turned from the fire, facing her, sharp-shooting her with his eye. "Who is he?"

"A man who will almost get down on his knees to you for saving my life. Oh, and I haven't told you about Maurice La Murex? I am engaged to him."

"He's a Greaser."

"Indeed he is not. He is New Orleans French of noble origin."

"I'll bet he squints."

"He does nothing of the sort, sir, and you ought to be ashamed of yourself to sit up there and talk like that."

"He's a mule trader."

"That's all you know about it, smarty. He sells automobiles; and I wish you could see him. He's the sweetest thing!"

"Thing, no doubt."

He turned toward the fire, the blaze crackling at him in gaying merriment.

A stranded woodpecker hammered the roof. A quail whirled past the door, and he knew that it would dip down to its death long before it could wing to the distant shore. He got up to go out, halting at the door with his heart beating a prayer that she might call him back, but she sat there humming a tune improvised of indifference; and he strode forth treading the tender saplings beneath his feet.

He hung near, hoping her to come to the door, striving to compel her with his mind, but the door remained a frame without that thrilling picture. The physical field of his meditation was hemmed within a few acres, a miniature desert; and then came a sickening realization that all fields, all groves, all palaces must be desolate without Jane to illumine them.

"She has caught me because she is the most completely womanly woman I have ever met," he mused. "She boxes the jaws of all philosophy and makes all poetry waltz to the tune of her own humming. But what am I going to say to her father, the old judge, when the mission of my journey fetches up brutish at his hearth-stone? What will the old man say when he sees me come up as the rescuer of his daughter?"

What was that? He leaped about, facing the cabin. Had she called him? He listened. No, it was the breeze whispering low amid the tender leaves.

III

"I think it mean of you to go off there and leave me here all alone," she said.

He sat down by the fire. "I didn't think you'd care," he answered.

"But you didn't care to ask me whether I would care or not."

"You were engaged with your music and I didn't think—"

"That's very true; you didn't... Mr.—I'm still going to call you Smuggles—you are deceiving me every minute and you know it. That is, you think you are deceiving me. You are a society man."

"Yes, I belong to the Elks."

"Oh, I don't mean that: I mean you move—"

"Well yes, I can't deny it—nearly every month."

"I won't talk to you if you won't let me talk. I mean you occupy some sort of position."

"Oh, but you are the hardest man I ever tried to talk to, except when you are on a log."

"No doubt. And this fellow—what's his name?"

He reached for her hand with none too graceful a play of carelessness.



"I told you about our family's coat-of-arms."

"Yes, and you told me many other things that I don't believe. Why is it that a woman is so much more truthful than a man?"

"As Artemus Ward said, inasmuch as to how?"

"You mean Maurice La—"

"Yes, that's the duck."

"The dearest duck in the world."

"No doubt. He pitches horse-shoes in front of a country store."

She laughed, and the fire, now dying, murmured an echo of her melody. "He'd pull your ears if you'd tell him that."

"Yes, and I suppose he pulls ears till they stretch out like strings of chewing gum from the mouth of a backwoods flirt."

She pouted. "Now you are going to be cross again. Let us be good friends, for I like you, next to Maurice. . . You look as if you'd read a whole lot. Have you?"

"No matter what I'd read, you'd blur it all out of my mind."

"Now I call that cute, Smuggley. I'll let you call me Jane if you let me call you Smuggley. All right, that's a bargain; but when we get back to where the folks are we'll have to be particular, for there's Maurice to consider. . . But I do like you much, and you know that Southern girls mean what they say. They don't flirt, Maurice knows—"

"Hang Maurice."

"Oh, how sorry I am to hear you say that, you who have been such a benefactor to me. . . But you don't know how learned he is. He took the prize—"

"At a baby show."

She clapped her hands. "He did, years ago, but who told you? It was at a cotton exposition in New Orleans. His mother told me about it. He was dressed in white with pink bows—"

"Let us hush this nonsense and talk about life, Jane. You are the most beautiful woman I ever saw, but you ought to have—"

"Some sense? That's what my father says. And I try to have, whenever there is an inducement. But you know a man, no matter how smart he is, tries to make a woman silly. That makes him appear wiser. But out of a woman's silliness there may come genius, the genius of the discovery of weakness in man."

"By George, Jane, you are a philosopher."

"When you say a woman is a philosopher you mean that she is loosening her hold on you. Philosophy is a vinegar, woman's power an oil; and—"

"That's enough. And do you mean to tell me that you don't read anything but silly stuff?"

"No, I don't, though I might know that your regard for me would be less if you knew that I read my father's big leather books; but you'd rather I'd read

silly things, wouldn't you? Isn't that what you were thinking? Won't you please tell me what you really were thinking?"

"Yes, I was thinking that I'd give anything in the world to—kiss you."

He did not look up at her, but he heard the swish of her skirt, and when he glanced about she was gone. His heart was low, for he had taken advantage of her situation, but he did not stir; he hovered over the fire and waited. The soft breeze whispered its Southern spring-time indolence, lazied time halting to mock and to humiliate him, and still he sat there, gazing into the fire, his soul urging an apology, his wits too dull to give it grace, and benumbed though he was, he felt that graceful it must be to clear him of his crime.

Something fell on his lap—two violets—and he looked up, and there she stood, smiling down upon him. Up he sprang, a fire within him burning up his apology. She drew back from him, still smiling, and the ashes of his apology blew away.

"Ah, I begged of you two roses, Jane, the roses of your lips, and you give me two violets."

Quickly she ran away from him, but at the door she turned and flashed a challenge, and he sprang toward her, but she was gone, out into the sapling tangle. Then he heard her cry, "Oh, here comes a launch. Aren't you glad?"

IV

The launch landed; a plank was thrown out and they went aboard, Smuggles trying to laugh because she was laughing, but in his heart was the smother feeling that though they still were together, yet was she speeding away from him. She was questioning the launchman and he heard that the captain of the steamboat had escaped with his life, but that two deck hands had been drowned.

"The captain gave it out to the newspapers," said the launchman, "that you and Mr.—"

"My name is Smuggles."

"That don't sound exactly like the name the captain give out, but anyhow,

Miss, he said he thought you and the man must be lost."

"My poor father," the girl moaned. "As soon as I can get to a railroad station I'll telegraph to him. Oh, isn't that Beavertown away over yonder?"

The launchman answered, "Yes, Miss, and never before in my recollection has the river come up into the back yards of that berg, but in 1884—"

Smuggles cut him off: "Yes, bad then. You don't live a great way from there, Miss Jane?"

"About fifty miles; and I think we can get a train this evening and reach home by ten o'clock. . . . You are going with me, aren't you?"

He hesitated, his heart fluttering. "Yes, I might—"

"Oh, not unless you want to, Mr. Smuggles; oh, no, not at all. You have already given me a good deal of your time and it's not right to ask you for any more of it, but I thought you might want to thank my father—I mean have him thank you; still, if you are busy—"

"I am going with you."

"Certainly, if you don't mind. Father will be delighted to see you, but if you don't think it worth your while it would be rude of me to insist."

With a look almost of tearful innocence she tantalized him; and he gulped in perplexity, all humorous spirit having deserted him. The launchman blurted on about the high water of his younger days and she encouraged him, plied him with questions when he had arrived at a logical place to leave off; and bare-headed Smuggles sat there, dry-grinning in the sun.

When they reached the shore she tripped gaily off upon a board sidewalk. Smuggles dropped two twenty-dollar gold-pieces in the hand of the launchman and followed her to the railway station. She had found another tune and she hummed her way to the telegraph window, hummed a dispatch to her father, then turned and bestowed attention upon a flea-bitten dog, refugee from barbaric boys in the neighborhood. Then she caught up a child, rosy property of a sturdy woman, and hugged it; and Smuggles sat on a bench jealous of child and dog. After a time she found

him, surprise lighting her countenance, and asked him how long before they could get a train, as if he were the station agent. He hopped up to find out and learned that an unscheduled train would soon feel its way through the oozy woods, out to higher ground.

"Oh, and Father won't know exactly when we—I am coming, but we live only a short walk from the station. Our house is known as Magnolia Hall; and the trees are just about beginning to bloom. It's the sweetest place!"

Smuggles had no doubt of it. How could it be otherwise, even though it might be in a forest blasted and blackened by fire, and she frowned at him and hugged the baby again?

In the train she met a woman, a mere acquaintance, but she sat down beside her, beamed bright interest upon her, and Smuggles, in the seat behind, gazed upon the roses of her lips, blooming fresher every moment. The woman bustled out to the water cooler and Smuggles found time for a word:

"That fellow La Murez will find he's got a scrap on his hands. He's got no walk-over."

"I don't think that's nice to talk that way when he's never done you any harm. He doesn't even know you are alive! How men do hate one another! But I am sure Maurice will like you. He will grasp you by the hand—"

"Yes, he will! And you think I'd stand there and let him? Once in a man's life a woman may turn his mind wrong side out and shake his startled senses upon the blustering wind, but he is a fool indeed if he lets a man rob him of his self-respect."

"Hush, here come Mrs.—I've forgotten her name, but isn't she a dear?"

Off the train and a red moon paling as it rose and burnished the brush of a distant hill-top. No one to meet them, the train not having been forecast; and Smuggles was glorified with the thought of walking unobserved with her, but a fool came up with a lantern and offered his services to light the way.

In the light pouring from the broad windows, out upon the veranda, the old judge was pacing slowly up and down.



and with a glad cry Jane ran to him. Smuggles, hanging back, heard him God-blessing her as she stood with his arms about her; and then came Jane's voice calling her deliverer. Up he came into the light, and the old judge, suppressing an impulse to seize his hand, stepped back and bowed profoundly.

"Father, this is Mr. Smuggles, and but for him I should never have seen you again."

"Sir," said the judge, "I am more than deeply grateful. But why should you have told her your name was Smuggles?"

It lay now within Smuggles' dignified province to bow. "I did not know, sir, but that you might have discussed your affairs with her, and I did not wish to embarrass her with my name."

"Ah, I thank you sir. My daughter, this is Mr. Fontaine, junior member of the firm of Forbes and Fontaine, commission merchants of Memphis, to whom I am mortgaged for more than I am worth, and he has come to close me out."

And Jane's voice rang low, like the murmured melody of the

Smuggles was glorified with the thought of walking unobserved with her.

water buoying the old log: "Oh, you haven't anything of the sort, have you Mr. Smug—Mr. Fontaine?"

Fontaine laughed. "No, Judge. I have come to tell you that you may have all the time you want."

"There," said Jane, and the old man grabbed Fontaine's hand. "God bless you, sir; you are a Southern gentleman, sir. My daughter, shake hands with Mr. Fontaine."

She gave him her hand and he would have stood there all night holding it, but she drew it gently away.

"God bless you, sir," the old man broke out again, and then he added: "I must run over right now and tell my old friend Dabney the news. He was about to mortgage his own plantation to help me out—God bless him, too." My dear Fontaine, make yourself perfectly at home, sir."

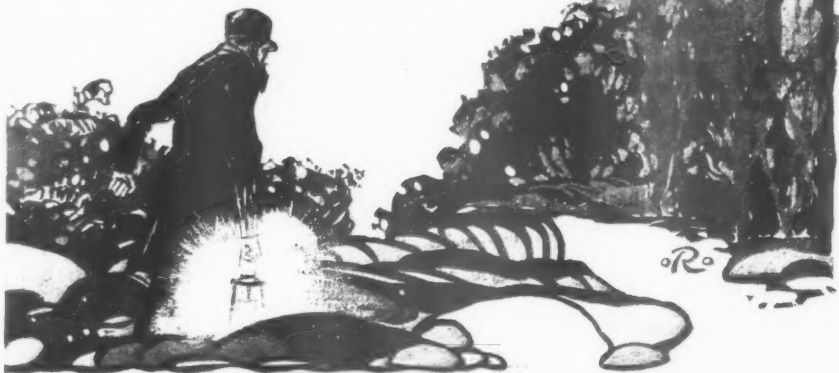
Down the steps he went, faster than he had done for many a year, and they saw him halt out in the twilight to caress his gladsome dogs.

Now they sat by the great fire-place, filled with boughs in bloom.

"Mr. Fontaine, you deceived me, and I deceived you, too. My name isn't Jane any more than yours is Smuggles. My name is Viola; and I deceived you in another way, too. There never was any such a man as Maurice La Murez."

Up he sprang, she with him, and he found her hands, and holding them within his own he gazed dim into her eyes. "Viola, give me my roses—*now*."

And she did.



but a fool came with a lantern and offered his services to light the way.



Weyman, the hero.

A Complete Résumé of the Opening Installment of the New Novel by the Author of the "Kazan" Stories

JAMES OLIVER CURWOOD, constant explorer and student of the far North, has found knighthood still in flower up there in "God's Country"—real knighthood, the kind of the days of old when men fought and died for the sake of womanhood. It is up near the rim of the Arctic where you first meet his knight and his beautiful woman, daughter of a descendant of one of those English nobles, who came out to the new world some three hundred years ago to hunt the ermine for royalty.

Philip Weyman is an American who has tried to forget the mishaps of his life in government research far from the outposts of civilization. After two years in the land of midnight sun, he starts south for home. He stops one autumn day six hundred miles north of the nearest town, to cook his meager lunch, believing he is remote from any human being. He follows a bear track and comes on a wonderful girl of pure English type, combing her shining hair by the side of a pool.

At first, the girl is terror stricken. But Weyman's manner is straightforward, and when he tells her he has been two years in the North, she is strangely reassured. She tells him she is alone, to see what effect that knowledge will have on him. She sees only deep and honest admiration. He asks the meaning of her terror and she confides that she is hiding from an enemy; she feared he might be an emissary from that enemy. He begs her to tell him her trouble.

"Would you do a great deal for me—like a man?" she asks.

He bows his head and the girl seems on the point of telling him. Instead, she bids him come to a near-by spot in half an hour.

At the appointed time, Weyman eagerly appears and finds the girl ready to receive him. Her hair has become a glinting coronet about her

head, and she leads him to a cloth on the ground spread with cake, jam, cold meats, and pickles. Cake and pickles are what he craves. He tells how he has hungered for pickles, dreamed of them running on legs, and how when he caught up with them, he found they had changed into icebergs. He eats ravenously of the cake and pickles; and the girl is wholly reassured. She knows the starved mark of the man who has lived a long time on bannock.

Then she tells him what she wants him to do. He is to assume the name Philip Paul Darcambal, to go back to her home with her and to pose there as her husband. He is to protect her, to fight for her blindly. He is never to ask the reason, and in the end, when his service has been complete, he is to go into the woods and die—to her and those who know her.

Philip is staggered. But his captivation by the beauty and charm of this wondrous forest girl, who gives him only the name Josephine, is so complete that he believes the joy of that union, though only a dream, greater than any he has ever contemplated. He accepts.

As they rise, Philip sees canoes approaching in the distance. They fear it is the enemy, till Philip perceives that the men are Indians. At that, Josephine knows they are friends, come to fetch her home. She insists on meeting the leader of the party, Jean Jacques Croisset, a half-breed, alone. After a few words, Jean goes to Philip and says significantly:

"I am glad it is you that chance sent us, M'sieur Weyman. Our Josephine trusts you as she would not one in a million." Then with glittering eyes: "And for you—death, unless you play your part like a man."

Soon after the making of the strange pact, and the stranger threat, this party of mystery sets off, Josephine in Philip's canoe and the watchful Jean following.

God's Country— And the Woman



Josephine, the heroine

A SPLENDID NEW
NOVEL OF THE NORTH

By James Oliver Curwood

Author of "Kazan," "Isobel," etc.

CHAPTER VI

ILLUSTRATED
BY
WILLIAM
OBERHARDT

AT the touch of Weyman's lips to her hair Josephine lay very still, and Philip wondered if she had felt that swift, stolen caress. Almost he hoped that she had. The silken tress where for an instant his lips had rested seemed to him now like some precious communion cup in whose sacredness he had pledged himself. Yet had he believed that she was conscious of his act, he would have begged her forgiveness. He waited, breathing softly, putting greater sweep into his paddle to keep Jean well behind them.

Slowly the tremulous unrest of Josephine's shoulders ceased. She raised her head, and looked at him, her lovely face damp with tears, her eyes shimmering like velvety pools through their mist. She did not speak. She was woman now—all woman. Her strength, the bearing which had made him think of her as a queen, the fighting tension which she had been under, were gone. He thought no longer of himself now. He knew that to him she had relinquished the mysterious

fight under which she had been struggling. In her eyes he read her surrender. From this hour the fight was his. She told him, without speaking. And the glory of it all thrilled him with a sacred happiness, so that he wanted to drop his paddle, draw her close into his arms, and tell her that there was no power in the world that could harm her now. But instead of this he laughed low and joyously full into her eyes, and her lips smiled gently back at him. And so they understood without words.

Behind them, Jean had been coming up swiftly, and now they heard him break for an instant into the chorus of one of the wild half-breed songs, and Philip listened to the words of the chant which is as old in the Northland as the ancient brass cannon and the crumbling fortress rocks at York factory:

Oh, ze beeg black bear, he go to
court,
He go to court a mate;
He court to ze Sout',
He court to ze Nort',
He court to ze shores of ze Indian
Lake.

And then, in the moment's silence that followed, Philip threw back his head, and in a voice almost as wild and untrained as Jean Croisset's, he shouted back:

Oh! the fur fleets sing on Temiskaming,
As the ashen paddles bend,
And the crews carouse at Rupert's House,
At the sullen winter's end.
But my days are done where the lean wolves run,
And I ripple no more the path
Where the gray geese race 'cross the red moon's face
From the white wind's Arctic wrath.

The suspense was broken. The two men's voices, rising in their crude strength, sending forth into the still wilderness both triumph and defiance, brought the quick flush of living back into Josephine's face. She guessed why Jean had started his chant—to give her courage. She knew why Philip had responded. And now Jean swept up beside them, a smile on the half-breed's thin, dark face.

"The Good Virgin preserve us, M'sieur, but our voices are like those of two beasts," he cried.

"Great, true, fighting beasts," whispered Josephine under her breath. "How I would hate almost. . ."

She had suddenly flushed to the roots of her hair.

"What?" asked Philip.

"To hear men sing like women," she finished.

As swiftly as he had come up, Jean and his canoe had sped on ahead of them.

"You should have heard us sing that up in our snow hut, when for five months the sun never sent a streak above the horizon," said Philip. "At the end—in the fourth month—it was more like the wailing of madmen. MacTavish died then: a young half Scot, of the Royal Mounted. After that Radisson and I were alone, and sometimes we used to see how loud we could shout it, and always, when we came to those two last lines—"

She interrupted him by repeating the words of the song:

Where the gray geese race 'cross the red moon's face
From the white wind's Arctic wrath.

"Your memory is splendid," he cried admiringly. "Yes, always when we came to the end of those lines, the white foxes would answer us from out on the barrens, and we would wait for the sneaking yelping of them before we went on. They haunted us like little demons, those foxes, and never once could we catch a glimpse of them during the long night. They helped to drive MacTavish mad. He died begging us to keep them away from him. One day I was awakened by Radisson crying like a baby, and when I sat up in my ice bunk he caught me by the shoulders and told me that he had seen something that looked like the glow of a fire thousands and thousands of miles away. It was the sun, and it came just in time."

"And this other man you speak of, Radisson?" she asked.

"He died two hundred miles back," replied Philip quietly. "But that is unpleasant to speak of. Look ahead. Isn't that ridge of the forest glorious in the sunlight?"

She kept her eyes on his face.

"Do you know, I think there is something wonderful about you," she said, so gently and frankly that the blood rushed to his cheeks. "Some day I want to learn those words that helped to keep you alive up there. I want to know all of the story, because I think I can understand. There was more to it—something after the foxes yelped back at you?"

"This," he said, and ahead of them Jean Croisset rested on his paddle to listen to Philip's voice:

My seams gape wide, and I'm tossed aside
To rot on a lonely shore,
While the leaves and mould like a shroud enfold,
For the last of my trails are o'er;
But I float in dreams on Northland streams
That never again I'll see,
As I lie on the marge of the old Portage,
With grief for company.

"A canoe!" breathed the girl, looking back over the sunlit lake.



He bent his head lower, and whispered: "To-night, my Josephine—just this night—may I wish you all the hope and happiness that God can bring you, and kiss you—once—" In that moment's silence he heard the throbbing of her heart.

"Yes, a canoe, cast aside, forgotten, as sometimes men and women are forgotten when they're down and out."

"Men and women who live in dreams," she added. "And with such dreams there must always be grief."

There was a moment of the old pain in her face, a little catch in her breath, and then she turned and looked at the forest ridge to which he had called her attention.

"We go deep into that forest," she said. "We enter a creek just beyond, where Jean is waiting for us, and Adare House is a hundred miles to the south and east." She faced him with a quick smile. "My name is Adare," she explained, "Josephine Adare."

"Is—or was?" he asked.

"Is," she said; then, seeing the correcting challenge in his eyes, she added quickly: "But only to you. To all others I am Madame Paul Darcambal."

"Paul?"

"Pardon me, I mean Philip."

They were close to shore, and fearing that Jean might become suspicious of his tardiness, Philip bent to his paddle and was soon in the half-breed's wake. Where he had thought was only the thick forest he saw now a narrow opening toward which Jean was speeding his canoe. Five minutes later they passed under a thick mass of overhanging spruce boughs into a narrow stream so still and black in the deep shadows of the forest that it looked like oil. There was something a little awesome in the suddenness and completeness with which they were swallowed up. Over their heads the spruce and cedar tops met and shut out the sunlight. On both sides of them the forest was thick and black. The trail of the stream itself was like a tunnel, silent, dark, mysterious. The paddles dipped noiselessly, and the two canoes traveled side by side.

"There are few who know of this break into the forest," said Jean in a low voice. "Listen, m'sieur!"

From out of the gloom ahead of them there came a faint, oily splashing.

"Otter," whispered Jean. "The stream is like this for many miles, and it is full of life that you can never see because of the darkness."

Something in the stillness and the gloom held them silent. The canoes slipped along like shadows, and sometimes they bent their heads to escape the low-hanging boughs. Josephine's face shone whitely in the dusk. She was alert and listening. When she spoke, it was in a voice strangely subdued.

"I love this stream," she whispered.

"It is full of life. On all sides of us, in the forest, there is life. The Indians do not come here, because they have a superstitious dread of this eternal gloom and quiet. They call it the Spirit Stream. Even Jean is a little oppressed by it. See how closely he keeps to us. I love it, because I love everything that is wild. Listen! Did you hear that?"

"*Moosica*," spoke Jean out of the gloom close to them.

"Yes, a moose," she said. "Here is where I saw my first moose, so many years ago that it is time for me to forget," she laughed softly. "I think I had just passed my fourth birthday."

"You were four on the day we started, *ma Josephine*," came Jean's voice, as his canoe shot slowly ahead where the stream narrowed; and then his voice came back more faintly: "That was sixteen years ago to-day."

A shot breaking the dead stillness of the sunless world about him could not have sent the blood rushing through Philip's veins more swiftly than Jean's last words. For a moment he stopped his paddling and leaned forward so that he could look close into Josephine's face.

"This is your birthday?"

"Yes. You ate my birthday cake."

She heard the strange, happy catch in his breath as he straightened back and resumed his work. Mile after mile they wound their way through the mysterious, subterranean-like stream, speaking seldom, and listening intently for the breaks in the death-like stillness that told of life. Now and then they caught the ghostly flutter of owls in the gloom, like floating spirits; back in the forest saplings snapped and brush crashed underfoot as caribou or moose caught the man-scent; they heard once the panting, sniffing inquiry of a bear close at hand, and Philip reached forward for his rifle. For an instant Josephine's hand fluttered to

his own, and held it back, and the dark glow of her eyes said, "Don't kill." Here there were no big-eyed moose-birds, none of the mellow throat sounds of the brush sparrow, no harsh janglings of the gaudily colored jays. In the timber fell the soft footpads of creatures with claw and fang, marauders and outlaws of darkness. Light, sunshine, everything that loved the openness of day, were beyond. For more than an hour the party had driven the canoes steadily on when, as suddenly as they had entered it, they slipped out from the cavernous gloom into sunlight again.

Josephine drew a deep breath as the sunlight flooded her face and hair.

"I have my own name for that place," she said. "I call it the Valley of Silent Things. It is a great swamp, and they say that the moss grows in it so deep that caribou and deer walk over it without breaking through."

The stream was swelling out into a narrow, finger-like lake that stretched for a mile or more ahead of them, and she turned to nod her head at the spruce and cedar shores with their colorings of red and gold, where birch and poplar and ash splashed vividly against the darker background.

"From now on it is all like that," she said. "Lake after lake, most of them as narrow as this, clear to the doors of Adare House. It is a wonderful lake country, and one may easily lose oneself—hundreds of lakes, I guess, running through the forests like Venetian canals."

"I would not be surprised if you told me you had been in Venice," he replied. "To-day is your birthday—your twentieth. Have you lived all those years here?"

He had repressed his desire to question her, because he knew she understood that to be a part of his promise to her. In what he now asked her he could not believe that he was treading upon prohibited ground, and in the face of their apparent innocence he was dismayed at the effect his words had upon her. It seemed to him that her eyes flinched when he spoke, as if he had struck at her. There passed over her face the look which he had come to dread, a swift, tense betrayal of the grief which he

knew was eating at her soul, and which she was fighting so courageously to hide from him. It had come and gone in a flash, but the pain of it was left with him. She smiled at him a bit tremulously.

"I understand why you ask that," she said, "and it is no more than fair that I should tell you. Of course you are wondering a great deal about me. You have just asked yourself how I could ever hear of such a place as Venice, away up here among the Indians. Why, do you know?"—she leaned forward, as if to whisper a secret, her blue eyes shining with a sudden laughter—"I've even read the 'Lives' of Plutarch and I'm waiting patiently for the English to hang a few of those terrible Lucrezia Borgias who call themselves militant suffragettes!"

"I—I—beg your pardon," he stammered helplessly.

She no longer betrayed the hurt of his question, and so sweet was the laughter of her eyes and lips that he laughed back at her, in spite of his embarrassment. Then, all at once, she became serious.

"I am terribly unfair to you," she apologized gently; and then, looking across the water, she added, "Yes, I've lived almost all of those twenty years up here—among the forests. They sent me to the Mission school at Fort Churchill, over on Hudson's Bay, for three years; and after that, until I was seventeen, I had a little white-haired English governess at Adare House. If she had lived—" Her hands clenched the sides of the canoe, and she looked straight away from Philip. She seemed to force the words that came from her lips then. "When I was eighteen I went to Montreal—and lived there a year. That is all—that one year—away from—my forests—"

He almost failed to hear the last words, and he made no effort to reply. He kept his canoe nearer to Jean's, so that frequently they were running side by side. In the quick fall of the early Northern night the sun was becoming more and more of a red haze in the sky as it sank farther toward the western forests. Josephine had changed her position, so that she sat now facing the bow of the canoe. She leaned a little forward, her elbows resting in her lap, her chin

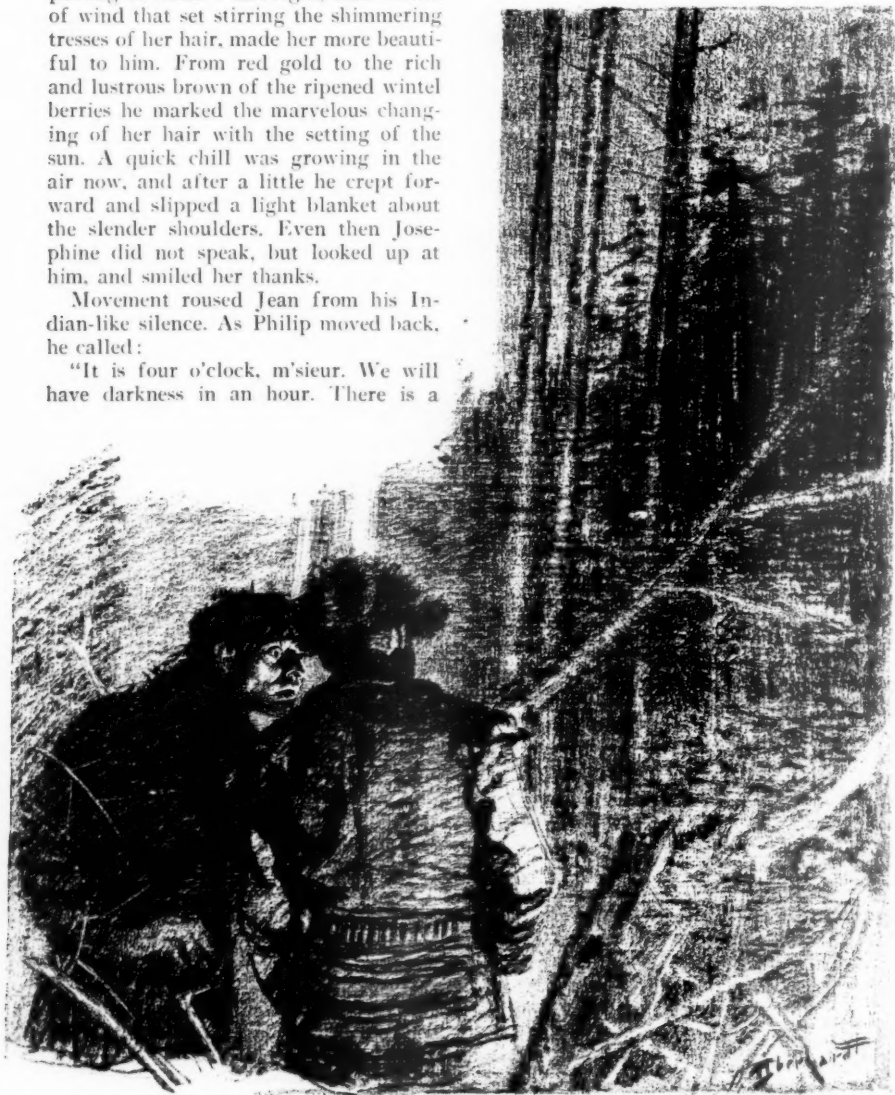
tilted in the cup of her hands, looking steadily ahead, and for a long time no sound but the steady *dip, dip, dip*, of the two paddles broke the stillness of their progress. Scarcely once did Philip take his eyes from her. Every turn, every passing of shadow and light, each breath of wind that set stirring the shimmering tresses of her hair, made her more beautiful to him. From red gold to the rich and lustrous brown of the ripened wintel berries he marked the marvelous changing of her hair with the setting of the sun. A quick chill was growing in the air now, and after a little he crept forward and slipped a light blanket about the slender shoulders. Even then Josephine did not speak, but looked up at him, and smiled her thanks.

Movement roused Jean from his Indian-like silence. As Philip moved back, he called:

"It is four o'clock, m'sieur. We will have darkness in an hour. There is a

place to camp and tepee poles ready cut on the point ahead of us."

Fifteen minutes later, Philip ran his canoe ashore close to Jean Croisset's on a beach of white sand. He could not help seeing that, from the moment she had



"Something will happen soon which may turn your heart to stone and ice, m'sieur," he said, and his voice was scarcely above a whisper. "I wanted her to tell you back there, two days ago, but she shrank from the ordeal then. It is coming to-night."

answered his question out on the lake, a change had come over Josephine. For a short time that afternoon she had risen from out of the thing that oppressed her, and once or twice there had been almost happiness in her smile and laughter. Now she seemed to have sunk again under its smothering grip. It was as if the chill and dismal gloom of approaching night had robbed her cheeks of color, and had given a tired droop to her shoulders as she sat silently, and waited for them to make her tent comfortable. When it was up, and the blankets spread, she went in and left them alone, and the last glimpse that he had of her face left with Philip a cameo-like impression of hopelessness. He looked closely at Jean as they put up their own tent, and for the first time he saw that the half-breed's face was filled with that same mysterious hopelessness and despair. Almost roughly Philip caught him by the shoulder.

"See here, Jean Croisset," he cried impatiently, "you're a man. What are you afraid of?"

"God," replied Jean, so quietly that Philip dropped his hand from his shoulder in astonishment. "Nothing else in the world am I afraid of, m'sieur!"

"Then why—why in the name of that God—do you look like this?" demanded Philip. "You saw her go into the tent. She is disheartened, hopeless because of something that I can't guess at, cold and shivering and white because of a *fear* of something. She is a woman. You are a man. Are you afraid?"

"No, not afraid, m'sieur. It is her grief that hurts me, not fear. If it would help her I would let you take this knife at my side and cut me into pieces so small that the birds could carry them away. I know what you mean. You think I am not a fighter. Our Lady in Heaven, if fighting could only save her!"

"And it cannot?"

"No, m'sieur. Nothing can save her. You can help, but you cannot save her. I believe that nothing like this terrible thing that has come to her has happened before since the world began. It is a mistake that it has come once. The Great God would not let it happen twice."

He spoke calmly. Philip could find no

words with which to reply. His hand slipped from Jean's arm to his hand, and their fingers gripped. Thus for a space they stood. Philip broke the silence.

"I love her, Jean," he said softly.

"Everyone loves her, m'sieur. All our forest people call her '*L'Ange*.'"

"And still you say there is no hope?"

"None."

"Not even—if we fight—?"

Jean's fingers tightened about Philip's.

"We may kill, m'sieur, but that will not save hearts crushed as—see!—as I crush these ash berries under my foot! I tell you again, nothing like this has ever happened before since the world began."

Steadily Philip looked into Jean's eyes.

"You have seen something of the world, Jean?"

"A good deal, m'sieur. For seven years I went to school at Montreal, and prepared myself for the holy calling of Missioner. That was many years ago. I am now simply Jean Jacques Croisset, of the forests."

"Then you know—you must know, that where there is life there is hope," argued Philip eagerly. "I have promised not to pry after her secret, to fight for her only as she tells me to fight. But if I knew, Jean—if I knew what this trouble is—how and where to fight! Is this knowledge—impossible?"

"Impossible, m'sieur!"

Slowly Jean withdrew his hand.

"Don't take it that way, man," exclaimed Philip quickly. "I'm not ferreting for her secret now. Only I've got to know—is it impossible for her to tell me?"

"As impossible, m'sieur, as it would be for me. And Our Lady herself could not make me do that if I heard Her voice commanding me out of Heaven. All that I can do is to wait, and watch, and guard. And all that you can do, m'sieur, is to play the part she has asked of you. In doing that, and doing it well, you will keep the last bit of life in her heart from being trampled out. If you love her—" He picked up a tepee pole before he finished, and then he said, "—you will do as you have promised."

There was a finality in the shrug of Jean's shoulders which Philip did not question. He picked up an axe, and while Jean arranged the tepee poles, began to chop down a dry birch. As the chips flew his mind worked faster. In his optimism he had half believed that the cloud of mystery in which Josephine had buried him would, in time, be voluntarily lifted by her. He had not been able to make himself believe that any situation could exist where hopelessness was as complete as she had described. Without arguing with himself, he had taken it for granted that she had been laboring under a tremendous strain, and that no matter what her trouble was, it had come to look immeasurably darker to her than it really was. But Jean's attitude, his low and unexcited voice and the almost omniscient decisiveness of his words had convinced him that Josephine had not painted it as blackly as she might. She, at least, had seemed to see a ray of hope. Jean saw none, and Philip realized that the half-breed's calm and unbeaten judgment was more to be reckoned with than hers. At the same time, he did not feel dismayed. He was of the sort who have born in them the fighting instinct. And with this instinct, which is two-thirds of life's battle won, goes the sort of optimism that has opened up raw worlds to the trails of men. Without the one the other cannot exist.

The blows of his axe cut deep into the birch. The muscles of his arms were like sinews of rawhide. Every fiber in his body was strung with a splendid strength. His brain was as clear as the unpolluted air that drifted over the cedar and spruce. And now to these tremendous forces had come the added strength of the most wonderful thing in the world: love of a woman. In spite of all that Josephine and Jean had said, in spite of all the odds that might be against him, he was confident of winning whatever fight might be ahead of him.

He not only felt confident, but cheerful. He did not try to make Jean understand what it meant to be in camp with the company of a woman for the first time in two years.

Josephine remained in her tent long

after the tents were up and the birch-fire was crackling cheerfully in the darkness. But the mere fact that she was there lifted Philip's soul to the skies.

And Josephine, with a blanket drawn about her shoulders, lay in the thick gloom of her tent and listened to him. His far-reaching, exuberant whistling seemed to warm her. She heard him laughing and talking with Jean, whose voice never came to her; farther back, where he was cutting down another birch, she heard him shout out the words of a song between blows; and once, sotto voce, and close to her tent, she quite distinctly heard him say "Damn!" She knew that he had stumbled with an armful of wood, and for the first time in that darkness and her misery she smiled. That one word alone Philip had not intended that she should hear. But when it was out, he picked himself up and laughed.

He did not meddle with Jean's cook-fire, but he built a second fire where the cheer of it would light up Josephine's tent, and piled dry logs on it until the flame of it lighted up the gloom about them for a hundred feet. Then he returned to help Jean with the supper. Croisset looked at him with an understanding smile.

"You are doing all you can to cheer her up, m'sieur," he said. "And we will have a feast for her birthday supper."

"Let me bake the bannock," suggested Philip. "I am somewhat of an expert—a bannock scientist, you might say."

Jean turned the flour over to him, and pointed to a pan in which there were several tablespoonfuls of melted butter. Philip scooped a hollow in his pan of flour, turned the butter in slowly, added a teaspoonful of baking powder, and began stirring gently, adding water until he had a thick batter. He then buttered two frying pans, and in each pan laid a biscuit of dough an inch and a half thick and two inches smaller in diameter than the pan itself. Raking up a glowing bed of coals he held the pans over them. Within three minutes the bannock had hardened enough on the bottom to turn. With a deft movement he flopped them over—and almost instantly they

began slowly to swell. Another five minutes and they were three inches thick, and *flop, flop, flop* they went as he kept them turning.

"Here's where the science of making bannock comes in," he interjected between flops. "Keep 'em moving after they've begun to swell. See that one, Jean! It's so light it's beginning to bust. You can talk about bread, but it isn't in it with the right sort of bannock. Confound the heat! That's the rub—you've got to roast yourself if you give 'em the right turn!"

Jean was stirring a pot of dessicated potatoes until they were turning a snowy white. In another pot were rice and raisins. Under cover of a big tin, a thick venison steak was broiling in its own juices, and the perfume of coffee reached even to Josephine's tent. When his bannocks were done to a brown, Philip spilled them out on a napkin to cool. Then, with a pan in one hand and a stick in the other he came close to Josephine's tent and beat a din that could have been heard a quarter of a mile away.

Josephine came out full in the floodlight of the fire, and he saw that she had been weeping. Even now there was a tremble of her lips as she smiled her gratitude. He dropped his pan and stick, and went to her. It seemed as if this last hour in the darkness of camp had brought her nearer to him, and he gently took her hands in his own and held them for a moment close to him. They were cold and trembling, and the one that had rested under her cheek was damp with tears.

"You mustn't do this any more," he whispered.

"I'll try not to," she promised. "Please let me stand a little in the warmth of the fire. I'm cold."

He led her close to the flaming birch logs and the heat soon brought a warm flush into her cheeks. Then they went to where Jean had spread out their supper on the ground. When she had seated herself on the pile of blankets they had arranged for her, Josephine looked across at Philip, squatted Indian fashion opposite her, and smiled apologetically.

"I'm afraid your opinion of me isn't getting better," she said. "I'm not much

of a—a—sport—to let you men get supper by yourselves, am I? You see—I'm taking advantage of my birthday."

"*Oui, ma belle princesse,*" laughed Jean softly, a tender look coming into his thin, dark face. "And do you remember that other birthday, years and years ago, when you took advantage of Jean Croisset while he was sleeping? *Non*, you do not remember?"

"Yes, I remember."

"She was six, m'sieur," explained Jean, "and while I slept, dreaming of one gr-r-rand paradise, she cut off my mustaches. They were splendid, those mustaches, but they would never grow right after that, and so I have gone shaven."

In spite of her efforts to appear cheerful, Philip could see that Josephine was glad when the meal was over, and that she was forcing herself to sip at a second cup of coffee on their account. He accompanied her back to the tent after she had bade Jean good-night, and as they stood for a moment before the open flap, there filled the girl's face a look that was partly of self-reproach and partly of wistful entreaty for his understanding and forgiveness.

"You have been good to me," she said. "No one can ever know how good you have been to me, what it has meant to me, and I thank you."

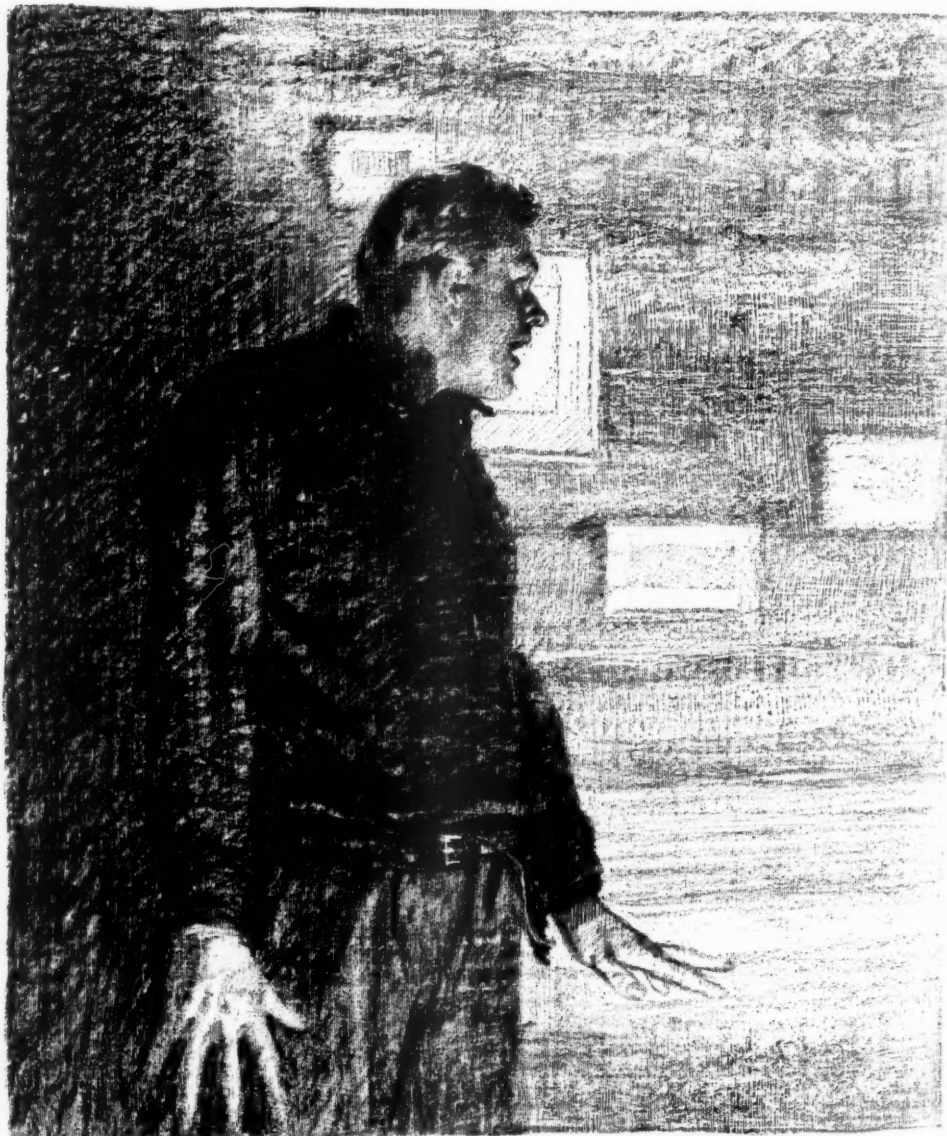
She bowed her head, and again he restrained the impulse to gather her close up in his arms. He bent his head low, and whispered:

"To-night, my Josephine—just this night—may I wish you all the hope and happiness that God can bring you, and kiss you—once—"

In that moment's silence he heard the throbbing of her heart. She seemed to have ceased breathing, and then, slowly, looking straight into his eyes, she lifted her lips to him, and as one who meets the soul of a thing too sanctified to touch with hands, he kissed her. In the maddening loneliness of those months that had seemed like years to him up where McTavish had gone mad, he had dreamed of this warmth and thrill of woman's lips. And yet he had dreamed of no One Woman. It was because, when nearest madness and death, the soul cries

out for that touch. To him it had given strength to look ahead, to fight, and to triumph. And now had come to him a realization greater than his dreams—love itself! With the warm sweetness of Josephine's lips as she pressed them

against his own he forgot time, and place—and the strength of resistance passed from him in a mighty flood. He swept her to him. In his low, passionate cry of her name there was the almost sobbing pathos of two years of hell. He



Philip turned suddenly from the door, facing the window in his room. The next instant he stood tense and

knew that she struggled in his arms. But he did not free her. He kissed her warm lips again and again—kissed her eyes, her neck, her hair. And then in a flash it came to him what he was doing. She was struggling. Her little hands were at his breast.



staring. A face was glued against the pane, dark, sinister, with eyes that shone with the menacing glare of a beast.

In her wide, frightened eyes there was an appeal that stabbed him like a dagger. Slowly his arms unclasped from about her, and he staggered a step back. She stood before him, panting, the soft lips he had crushed with kisses a little parted as she looked at him with a new and strange light in her face. He felt that in this hour he had lost the world. He had done what he would have given half his life to have undone. He had sunk—sunk deep into an abyss from which he knew that he could not drag himself. And in his agony he reached out his arms, and his voice was strange and broken.

"Oh my God, forgive me—forgive me for that!" he pleaded. "I was mad—like MacTavish. And now you will think I am the brute I have seemed to be, and that my love—is no better—than *this*! I'd give my life—if you could understand."

For a moment she stood and looked at him, still breathing quickly, and now he saw a softer glow take the place of the fear that had come into her eyes.

"I understand," she whispered, and her voice was so gentle that Philip knew it spoke forgiveness. "Good-night!"

He made no effort to speak as she turned and ran into her tent.

CHAPTER VII

IT was some time before Philip rejoined Jean. He went down to the shore of the lake and let the cool wind blow in his face. He knew that he could not trust himself to talk to the half-breed. Josephine's final words, the soft glow in her eyes, the robbing breath with which she had turned away from him, flooded his soul with a strange joy where a few moments before it had been filled with despair. His blood still ran uncomfortably hot with the thought that he had taken advantage of her. And yet was he sorry *now*? He dared not answer. He dared not think beyond the thought that he had held Josephine close in his arms, had kissed her again and again, and that *she had forgiven him*.

Jean had the supper things cleaned up when he returned to the camp fire. For a time after that they smoked. The

half-breed had lapsed again into his gloom and silence. Two or three times Philip caught Jean watching him furtively. He made no effort to force a conversation, and when he had finished his pipe he rose and went to the tent which they were to share together. At last he found himself not unwilling to be alone. He closed the flap to shut out the still brilliant illumination of the fire, drew a blanket about him, and stretched himself out on the top of his sleeping bag. He wanted to think.

He closed his eyes to bring back more vividly the picture of Josephine as she had given him her lips to kiss. This, of all the unusual happenings of that afternoon, seemed most like a dream to him, yet his brain was afire with the reality of it. His mind struggled again with the hundred questions which he had asked himself that day, and in the end Josephine remained as completely enshrouded in mystery as ever. Yet of one thing was he convinced. The oppression of the thing under which Jean and the girl were fighting had become more acute with the turning of their faces homeward.

At Adare House lay the cause of their hopelessness, of Josephine's grief, and of the gloom under which the half-breed had fallen so completely that night. Until they reached Adare House he could guess at nothing. And there—what would he find?

In spite of himself he felt creeping slowly over him a shuddering fear that he had not acknowledged before. The darkness deepening as the fire died away, the stillness of the night, the low wailing of a wind growing out of the north, roused in him the unrest and doubt that sunshine and day had dispelled. An uneasy slumber came at last with this disquiet. His mind was filled with fitful dreams. Again he was back with Radisson and MacTavish, listening to the foxes out on the barrens. He heard the Scotchman's moaning madness, and listened to the blast of storm. And then he heard a cry—a cry like that which MacTavish fancied he had heard in the wind an hour before he died. It was this dream-cry that roused him.

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The Long Arm of Coincidence

By John Barton Oxford

Author of "Its Own Reward," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY HANSON BOOTH

THERE hasn't been a writer in years who could crowd so much story into so few words as John Barton Oxford. He takes little chunks of life and flashes them before you with that clear-cut effect the motion pictures strive to attain. For instance, this story of a man searching for a lost love—the most critical would find difficulty in eliminating a word. It's another of those stories the other magazines simply do not get.

IT is quite probable you have often noticed how very fortuitously things are always happening in stories. This is simply because of the old primal law of necessity. They have to happen thus; else there would be no stories.

I defy anybody to peruse a piece of fiction without finding in it somewhere, more or less artfully concealed, the long arm of coincidence. Sometimes it is glaringly apparent; sometimes it isn't. But it is always there, and all too frequently it is a very, very long arm; so long it is a tax on one's credulity and almost an affront to one's supposed intelligence.

The courier rides up with the reprieve just in time to stay the execution; Wilson happens along just as beautiful Maysie's horse runs away, or Maysie has upset the canoe or done something equally interesting; William's first-born and best beloved comes artlessly toddling into the room at the precise moment when William, having speculated foolishly with funds borrowed from the bank that employs him and lost it all, is aiming an automatic gun at that point in his cranium where his brains should have been, and trying to screw up his courage to pull the trigger.

And so it goes. You can't get away

from it—at least, not in fiction. It is always there, breath of the story's breath, life of its very life—the long, long arm of coincidence.

Just what it was that guided Wayne Ellis' footsteps to the dingy lodging house on Spruce Street where the smudgily printed sign of Madam Zepala, the veiled seeress, was conspicuously displayed in the front window, is uncertain.

It may have been the fact that Wayne Ellis wished to consult a veiled seeress or something of the kind as a last resort, and yet that Wayne, having but little faith in the result of such a proceeding, concluded it would be quite as well to take a chance on a fifty-cent seeress as on any of the more expensive ones. This, I say, *may* have been the truth of it. It is quite a plausible explanation. Or it may be that Wayne turned his steps thither and learned from that smudgy sign that his past, his present and his future would be read, his business tangles straightened out and advice given him in any love affair for the modest stipend of a half-dollar, simply because we've got to have a fortuitous happening to make this story. This too is quite plausible, perhaps rather more so than the first suggestion.

At any rate, Wayne Ellis turned into

Spruce Street at that hour when it is neither daylight nor yet dark, paused before the house numbered 39, absorbed an account of Madam Zepala's truly wonderful psychic powers as set forth on the sign in the window, and suddenly decided to put the thing to a test and risk a perfectly good half-dollar in his so far fruitless quest.

Therefore he mounted the stoop, gave a vigorous tug to an old-fashioned glass bell-knob, and set to jangling somewhere in the dingy vitals of the house one of those old-style bells set on a coil of wire, which, once they are set in motion, keep on banging away dolefully for some few moments.

At the moment the wire-coiled bell struck up its melancholy ding-donging in the basement, Madam Zepala, who was very fat, red-faced and well on the wrong side of forty, was sadly inspecting the contents of her larder—an old salt-box nailed to the windowsill of a dingy little room, which together with the parlor just in front of it Madam Zepala rented as her combined place of business and residence.

With Madam Zepala at the time was another woman, also fat, also red-visaged, also far past the first flush of youth. Both of them were dowdy, worn, and with that hard, sharp look in their eyes that comes to people who live by their wits, and live hazardously, at that.

Madam Zepala had just pulled out of the salt-box one pale-looking pork chop, a goodly residue of a loaf of bread, some sadly wilted butter and a package of crackers, half-full.

"It aint much, Dell," she observed to the other woman, who perched disconsolately on a near-by trunk watching the operations. "But it's all I got, and all I can get. I'm worse than badly bent this time. I'm flat broke. I've had to put Sannie off three times about the rent. I never see business worse. Not a soul here for more'n three weeks, and I've went and had good-sized ad's in three papers the last two Sundays."

Dell arose and strode to the window. She looked searchingly at the ledge just outside. Her gaze was rewarded by the sight of two empty beer bottles perched there precariously, in danger, seemingly,

of slipping off to their destruction in the little paved back yard below, by reason of the decided slope of the said ledge.

Dell gazed at them mournfully, then picked one up and sniffed at the neck with a certain wistful mien.

"No beer?" she asked in a tone in which was the disappointment of all the ages.

"No," said Zepala. "Nor enough bottles to take back and change for even one full one. I aint had none for some time. Them dead ones has been settin' there all of a month."

Dell resumed her disconsolate seat on the trunk.

"Gee, this is one tough old world, aint it?" she observed originally.

Zepala lighted a small oil-stove, set a little agate fry-pan on it, and installed therein the one pork chop, which began to sizzle pleasantly and to give out appetizing odors.

"As I say, it wont be much of a supper," she repeated. "but such as it is, you're welcome to half of it. Say, there goes the bell. Go answer it, wont you? I aint fit to go to the door, and Sannie's out."

Zepala was indeed in no condition at that moment to answer the bell. The evening being warm, she had taken off her waist. Her fat arms and a part of her all too ample bosom were bare. Also, since she had been lying down reading a spicy paper-covered novel when Dell had appeared on the scene, her sparse hair, sadly grizzled from lack of its wonted administrations of dye, was in fine disarray.

She heard the front door creak and Dell's voice talking to some one on the stoop. Then the door of the parlor was opened and she heard Dell ushering the some one in there. Zepala turned from the sizzling chop and began to take notice.

In a moment Dell came fairly bursting in, her face plainly portraying her excitement.

"Some one to see you—a customer," she whispered hoarsely.

"No?" said Zepala in unbelief.

"Man—looks like a yap," Dell explained.



Dell resumed her disconsolate seat on the trunk. "Gee, this is one tough old world, aint it?" she observed originally.

Zepala began hurriedly bobbing up her dangled hair. The chop scorched unnoticed and unattended on the oil-stove. Zepala began smoothing out her rumpled skirt and wiping her perspiring face on a corner of her dish-towel.

"Maybe we git a decent supper after all," Dell suggested, standing by to lend aid when it should be required.

Zepala nodded.

"Gee! A customer!" said she. "First one for a month. I'm as excited as a girl goin' to her first ball. My veil and robe's in that closet there. Git 'em out quick, will you? And say, for the love of Pete, see if you can't find a cigarette butt round somewheres. My nerves is all shook up at the thought of a real payin' customer waitin' in there. Look behind the trunk. I guess maybe there's some there."

Dell got out the black robe with its plentiful besprinkling of tinsel stars and gilt moon-crescents, and, while Zepala swathed herself in it, poked and prodded behind the trunk. She straightened up triumphantly at last with the butts of two half-burned cigarettes in her fingers. One of these she placed between Zepala's lips and held a sputtering match to it; the other she lighted for herself and inhaled the stale-smelling fumes with a very evident relish.

At that moment a stifling odor arose even above the cigarette fumes. Zepala made a frenzied gesture in the direction of the oil-stove.

"Oh, Lord! The chop!" she gasped in a whisper that was very much of the stage variety. "Grab it off'n the stove, Dell, before it goes and scents up the place any more."

Then she drew the robe grandly about her and advanced creakingly towards the door to the parlor.

"Here's where I earn a real supper," said she. "We'll git some more chops and a couple bottles of beer and some cigarettes."

Down came the scarlet-hued veil over her coarse and reddened features. The door opened softly. Madam Zepala, with a tread which she considered glidingly light and girlish, but which none the less set the floorboards to complaining beneath her, moved into the parlor.

Her caller sat on the very edge of a couch covered with badly worn imitation leather. So dark was the place that she could not see his face nor yet his clothes. She only knew by the general contour of his figure that he was a very tall, broad-shouldered man with baggy garments fitting badly his big frame; plainly a "yap," as Dell had said.

"You wished to see me?" she said in low, unctuous tones.

"You are Madam Zepala?" asked the visitor.

"I'm Madam Zepala," said she. "Was it about your business?"

The man gave an embarrassed cough.

"No, I guess you'd call it love," he confessed.

"Ah!" said Madam Zepala. "A dollar, please, first."

The man demurred.

"I thought it was fifty cents. That's what your sign says," said he.

"That is for business advice and the simpler matters," said she. "Love—that is different. It is more difficult. There should be a deeper trance for a delicate affair of love—and no mistake should be made. Isn't love worth a dollar?"

The man coughed again.

"Maybe you're right," said he.

He dug into his pockets. Zepala heard the crackle of bills. Then one was thrust into her hand. It promptly found its way to a safe haven in the front of her corset-cover beneath the tinselled robe.

"Now, hadn't I better tell you what I hope you're goin' to do for me?" the man asked.

Zepala grinned to herself in the darkness. The man was a poor simp, that was a fact. Generally her customers wanted her to tell them why they had come to her. It was a part of their tests of her vaunted clairvoyant powers. More often than not she had to use all her wits in her guesses.

"By all means," she said in that mellow voice.

"I want you to find a girl for me," said he.

"Pick one out, you mean; advise you that way?"

"Oh, no—no. It's a girl I can't get track of. I came here to the city to find her. I can't get no trace of her. Maybe

that aint strange, though. Maybe she aint here in this city at all. I just happen to know she come here. That's all the clue I've got."

"How long ago was it you lost her?" Zepala asked.

"Fifteen years."

In the back room she could hear Dell wrapping the two beer bottles in paper; also the smell of cigarette-smoke drifted in to her.

"It's this way," the man on the edge of the couch went on, "I was pretty sweet on a nice girl in the town where I lived. She came there to work in a family. She was a nice girl, the prettiest you ever see. We went round together a lot. We decided I'd oughta go off and make my fortune. She was goin' to marry me if I went and made my fortune.

"So I went. You see, we'd talked it over. She had decided I wouldn't do if I remained what I was, just a plain grubber on the farm. So, I went off, like I'm tellin' you. Her name was Aggie Marr," he ended irrelevantly.

A chair creaked loudly. He did not know in the gloom of the parlor that Madam Zepala had started as if from an electric shock. She leaned forward suddenly to light two little gaudily shaded candles on the center table at her elbow. It was fortunate that she was veiled, for at the sight of the man's features thrown into prominence by the light of the two sputtering candles, Madam Zepala's breath came in quick gasps and her lips closed together rigidly as if they were trying to hold back a cry of surprise.

But the man on the couch saw only the swathed, veiled figure sitting there by the candles; nor did he notice how the wide bosom of the robe suddenly rose and fell, rose and fell.

"Yep, I wanted Aggie; I wanted her the worst way. She was the prettiest, sweetest little girl I'd ever seen," he rattled on. "But fortunes aint made by just goin' out and tryin' to make 'em, I found out. Two or three times I thought I was right close to one; but each time it got away before I could git salt on its tail.

"I been up to Alaska, and down in Mexico and out in the Northwest, in

Canada, and not a day of it but what I been a-thinkin' of Aggie Marr all the time. At first we wrote each other; then somehow we got outa the way of it—less and less frequent, you know, till we never wrote at all. I was knocking round so many places it would 'a' been hard to follow me, anyway; and I was busy chasin' that fortune. Aggie'd said she'd wait for me, but when I got to thinkin' it over I concluded it wa'n't right for me to keep a nice, pretty girl like her a-waitin' forever and losin' all her other chances, so the last letter I wrote her, I told her how I felt, that I should always feel the same about her, but for her to go ahead and marry if she had any good chance, fortunes bein' kinda slippery to grab holt of, as I'd learned.

"So it went on, year after year, till a spell ago I concluded a real fortune wa'n't for me, that I'd better go back and settle on the farm. My folks was dead and it had come to me, and there was always a good livin' to be made off'n it, if it was worked right.

"I thought I'd come back, and maybe find Aggie, and if she wa'n't married, I'd ask her if she wouldn't jest settle down on the farm with me. I hadn't no fortune to offer her, but travelin' round like I had I'd learned there was somethin' better than just money, and that was honesty and real affection between two folks. I know that there was affection like that between Aggie and me when I went away.

"So I come back; but Aggie had left the town, and I heard she'd come here to work in a family; so I come here, only to find she'd left the place she worked and gone to another, and from there to another and so on. And at the last place she'd worked they hadn't the least idea where I'd find her, and no one seemed to know anything about any friends of hers or anyone that'd know anything about her. So here I am. I want you to find Aggie Marr for me.

"Like enough she's already married to some well-to-do fellow and it wouldn't do me no good if we did find her. But if she aint married—"

"I don't suppose you ever think perhaps you'd rather not see her," Zepala suggested.



The man saw only the swathed, veiled figure sitting there by the candles; nor did he notice how the wide bosom of the robe suddenly rose and fell, rose and fell.

"What do you mean?" he asked quickly.

"Well, suppose she shouldn't be the same—suppose she was different; suppose she wa'n't so sweet or so good as she was when you knew her."

Down came a doubled fist on the edge of the couch so emphatically that a cloud of dust came purling out of its worn upholstery.

"I guess you don't know Aggie Marr," he said with vehemence. "Some girls change, I know; but not girls like her. When I find her she's goin' to be just as sweet and gentle and good as she was when I knew her—a little older maybe, a few wrinkles, and a little gray hair, perhaps; but that's all. She'll be just the same old Aggie Marr; I'm sure of that."

The bosom of Madam Zepala's gown became more disturbed. She saw this sorry place in all its tawdriness; she saw that depleted salt-box outside the back window; she saw Sannie dunning her again for the rent and threatening to put her into the street. She saw other things, too, things that made her shiver and suddenly realize how old and how tired and how disappointed she was. She started to throw back the veil, but something stayed her hand and the same something that stayed her hand set her to shivering so that she was afraid the man before her would notice it.

"Think you can get me any trace of her?" he was asking eagerly.

Behind the veil, Zepala's teeth shut on her under lip until the blood came. Three times she groaned hoarsely.

Wayne Ellis thought the whole performance on her part the agony accompanying the coming trance. He was quite unprepared to have the veiled seeress bounce suddenly out of the chair and grip his shoulders tensely.

"You wont never find her," said she in something like a wail.

"Huh? Why wont I? You aint been in no trance yet," he objected.

"Yes I have," said she wildly. "Yes, I have. And the stars is wrong. There's a dark cloud all round, too. You wont never find her—never, never find her.

So don't try no more and don't waste no more money tryin'. Here's your dollar back."

He had jumped off the couch. Quite against his will he had been forced gently but firmly into the front hall. Now she was holding the door open and manœuvring him onto the stoop.

He looked irresolutely at the dollar she had thrust back to him.

"Oh, I want to pay you, just the same," said he.

"I don't take no pay unless I'm successful," said she. "I aint been. You want to find that girl, but you wont never do it. Dead? I dunno. Maybe. Anyway, the stars say you wont and there's an awful cloud all round. So don't try no further. Things aint auspicious. They mean you'd be worse off if you did find her than as if you didn't. Good-night!"

The door banged. Wayne Ellis stood on a shabby Spruce Street door-stoop, looking at a dollar bill in his hands, until he was aware people were looking at him queerly and he concluded it was high time to move on.

"Well, here's the bottles all done up and ready to take back," gurgled Dell as Zepala came into the back room.

Then she caught sight of Zepala's twisted face as the veil was discarded.

"Why, Aggie Marr, what in time's the matter with you," she cried. "You look sick, and you been cryin'!"

"Don't you call me that name," said the seeress, wheeling on her fiercely. "Don't you never call me by that name again. I dropped it long ago for good and all. I wanta forget I ever had such a monicker. And I aint been cryin'—no I aint, neither; or, if I have, it's because I'm disappointed that we got to have just this stuff for supper. That boob you let in, he didn't have no money—one of the kind that wanted advice about business and me to take my fee in commissions outa what he made extr by my advice. I'd oughta 'a' known it would be somethin' like that. Come on. Let's eat what little we have got. Divide that chop as near even as you can."

A Pardner of Mr. Tarwater

By George Pattullo

Author of "The Stayer," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK B. HOFFMAN

EVERY now and then as one journeys through the hill or desert country of our Southwest, one runs across old prospectors giving their lives to the search for gold—"Desert rats," Peter B. Kyne calls them—and each one of them has a story. This is one of those stories, unfolded in a shack on the edge of the sands; and also a recital of the dramatic events which ensued during the night.

SOUNDS from French Joe's domicile indicated unpleasantness.

"Peeg!" shrilled the Frenchman's voice. "Peeg is what you are. Bah, I put the scorn upon you—thus."

His method of conveying scorn was distinctive—Joe came shooting out of his own house like a rocket, described a flawless parabola, and landed, with a thud that shook a grunt out of him, under a post oak a full five yards from the threshold. Under such circumstances one seeks the source of momentum. It appeared on the stoop in the person of a yellow-bearded giant who seemed to tingle for Frenchy to pick himself up and come back for more.

"So"—breathing in great gulps—"you'll snake my tobacco, will you? And away out here where we can't get any? That's the way you do a visitor, is it? Maybe this'll learn you manners."

"Peeg!" sobbed Frenchy, too sagacious to move, nevertheless. "Bah, how I hate you. Peeg, did I say? Ah, no. No, no. I apologize—I apologize to that noble animal."

This thrust in all likelihood would have precipitated another onslaught had not his assailant perceived my approach. Very foolish he looked, too, as might a grown boy caught at a child's

game, and he retreated hurriedly indoors.

As for French Joe, he first satisfied himself who the visitor was, then rose, dusted his clothes and welcomed me with what dignity he could muster.

"Get down and visit."

"I intend to. Can you bed me to-night, Frenchy?"

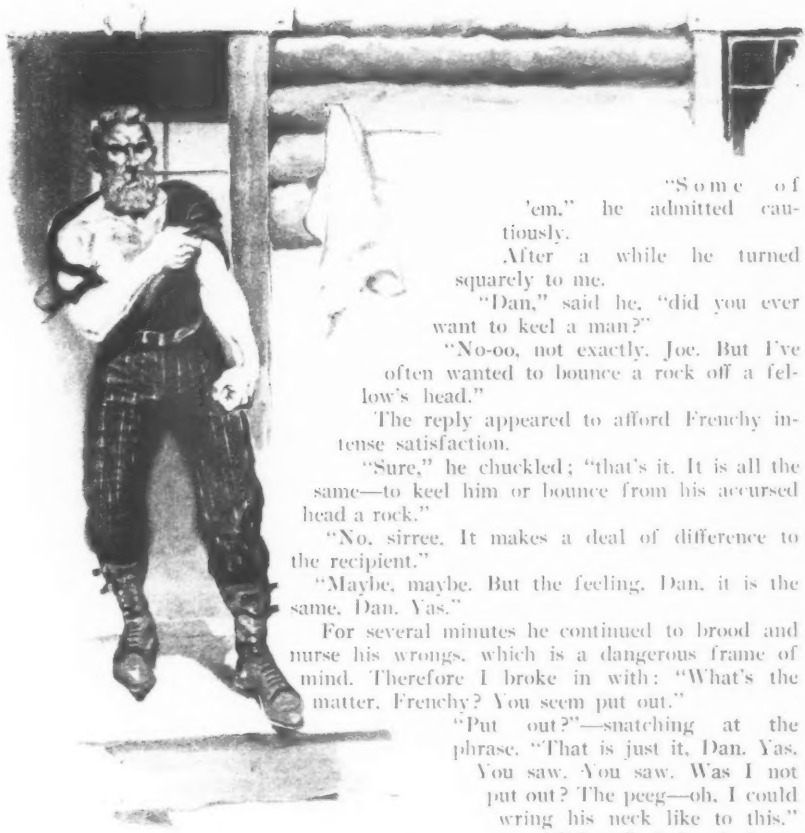
"Sure, Dan. Always my house is my friend's. Vas. Put your horse in the leetle corral and I will go get some supper, Dan."

The corral was a small, circular pen made of the slender, thorny stalks of *ocatilla*, and was situated about two hundred yards from the cabin. To unsaddle and feed took me scarcely five minutes, but when I returned, Joe was alone and frying bacon at the fireplace.

"That feller," he informed me with a shrug of disgust, "has gone away. And good riddance. Bah! Chuck, Dan."

After we had eaten, Joe tossed the tin dishes into a pan and shoved it under a bunk, cheerfully explaining that it would be an economy of labor to clean them in one batch on the morrow; and we carried stools outside for a breath of the evening cool.

If he had been a noble of the regime of Louis XIV, instead of a shiftless employee of a cattle company at thirty dollars a month, Joe could not have



"Some of 'em," he admitted cautiously.

After a while he turned squarely to me.

"Dan," said he, "did you ever want to keel a man?"

"No-oo, not exactly. Joe. But I've often wanted to bounce a rock off a fellow's head."

The reply appeared to afford Frenchy intense satisfaction.

"Sure," he chuckled; "that's it. It is all the same—to keel him or bounce from his accursed head a rock."

"No, sirree. It makes a deal of difference to the recipient."

"Maybe, maybe. But the feeling, Dan, it is the same, Dan. Yas."

For several minutes he continued to brood and nurse his wrongs, which is a dangerous frame of mind. Therefore I broke in with: "What's the matter, Frenchy? You seem put out."

"Put out?"—snatching at the phrase. "That is just it, Dan. Yas.

You saw. You saw. Was I not put out? The peeg—oh, I could wring his neck like to this."

"Pshaw." I laughed. "a man's bound to get the worst of a row

commanded a more lordly prospect for his home. The house stood on an elevation crowned by oaks. To the left rose the Cananea Mountains, somber with the majesty of the everlasting; on the right stretched the Blue Range, its ridges vague under an opalescent sheen. And straight away at our feet sloped the goodly Cuitaca Valley for twenty miles. It was all very serene and soothing.

Apparently oblivious to the serenity, Joe kept rubbing his hip where his late guest had applied the propulsion.

"Your feelings hurt, Joe?"

He favored me with a sharp look.



A yellow-bearded giant, who seemed to tingle for Frenchy to pick himself up and come back for more.

now and again, Joe. Don't take it so much to heart. It's only a little thing."

He mastered his passion with diffi-

culty. Very solemnly: "It is the leetle things that count. Yas. If a beeg thing happen, what do we do? Why, we are brave. We smile, Dan, no matter how seek of the inside we feel. Yas. But the leetle things—ah, they wear out a man's soul. And so with beeg Sloan—how I hate that feller! I hate Sloan worse'n a friend found out."

"Why a friend found out, Joe?" I queried mildly.

"Because him you hate the hardest."

"Not always. Sometimes they stick through thick and thin. I've got several friends who know I'm no good."

He received this with a mocking laugh.

"You Americans," he said loftily, "comfort yourselves with words."

The Frenchman's extravagances were not new to me, but they never lost a jot of their unpleasant savor. He was one of those unfortunate men who always see the flaw; gazing on the Venus de Milo, Joe would, without a doubt, decry a flyspeck and disparage her. Consequently I did not take up the cudgels, as he had hoped, and so balked him of an opportunity to air his cheap cynicism. Instead of arguing, we relaxed tired muscles and meditated, which was much better.

A line of cattle crossed our front, making for water—one by one, one by one. Bringing up the rear was a ponderous bull, rumbling his discontent. Blackbirds chattered in the willows far down on the edge of the creek, and Joe's chickens were cuddling closer in the trees above our heads. One gorgeous cock, having prolonged his pecking beyond the others, squatted, and flapped up to roost, shouldering in between two murmuring hens.

"Dammit," exclaimed Joe in exasperation, "here somebody comes."

Along the trail from town sounded a light, quick shuffle of feet. And shortly a man mounted on a burro bore down upon us. He led another, to which was strapped a monumental pack—all one could discern of the tiny creature that bore it was a thin pair of legs.

"Whoa, Vi'let!" Violet stopped and gently drooped her ears. Her master beamed on us benignly, crying in a glad,

relieved, high-pitched voice: "Gentlemen!"

He was a little old man of quite sixty-five years, with stooped shoulders and a gray wisp of beard. His skin was harshly wrinkled and leathery, yet his face was the sun-peeled face of a child.

Diminutive though he was, everything he had on looked inadequate to cover its allotted space. His torn, stained hat perched on the tip-top of his head; the sleeves of his shirt ended midway between wrist and elbow, and three inches of scrawny bare leg showed below his overalls, for the gentleman was without socks. A faded, washed-out derelict of the trail—a "no-account," as we call them west of 98—yet the spirit behind the eyes under those streaked, bushy brows was innocent and guileless and trusting.

"Gentlemen!" he greeted again.

"Howdy," Joe answered glumly. "Come far?"

"Forty miles to-day, friend. Can I stop here to-night?" He sang it out as though he thought we were deaf.

The Frenchman pulled on his mustache and sniffed, which was his way of being offensive.

"What other place would you go? It is nineteen miles like the crow to the next house."

"Much obliged, friend. And where can I turn my burros out? I've got feed for 'em. Yes, sir, right here in this sack. You bet I never let Vi'let go hungry, do I, girl?"

"Turn them loose anywheres. Will they run off? No? That is good. They are sensible creatures, burros. Yas. You want supper?"

"I wouldn't choose any, thanks," returned the visitor. "I ate some beef and bread as I came along. Well, here goes."

He started to remove the load from the pack animal. Much mollified on learning that he would not have to provide for his chance guest, Joe joined me in helping him.

He said his name was Jimmy Tarwater and that he was "just looking round." Which meant, of course, that Mr. Tarwater climbed miles of mountains daily, and chipped rocks with a hammer, and lived on "jerky" and bread.

and slept where he found himself at dusk, and dreamed of gold in chunks, or of a vein of copper reaching clear through to China. His kind are all through the mountainous Southwest, and they live hard lives with a most amazing tenacity. Hope never dies in them. They may be doddering on the wrong side of ninety, but still

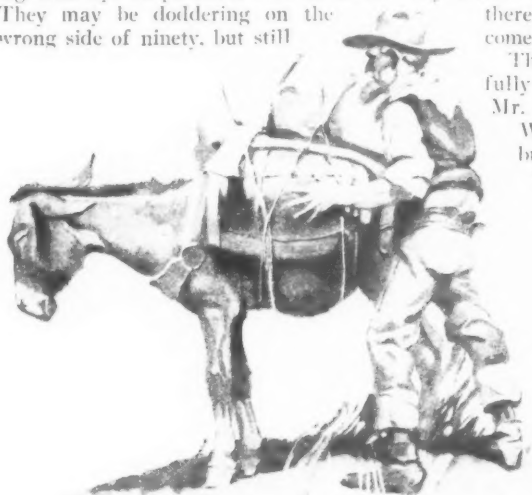
My interference earned me a venomous glance from Frenchy, but he rose to the sacrifice.

"All right," he agreed. "Carry your blankets inside to the house. Meestair Tarwater. We have two beds only and my friend I have here with me. But there is the floor. You are welcome."

The prospector replied gratefully: "You're shore kind to me, Mr. Joe."

We watched him grain the burros, grinning over his habit, acquired in solitudes, of humming and talking to himself. Then he carried his bedding into the shack.

The shack consisted of a single room about thirty by



Mr. Tarwater's pack appeared to give him undue concern. In opening it he exercised caution verging on stealth.

they conjure up visions of "striking it rich." Some day, somebody remarks in town that "Ol' Jed hasn't been in for supplies in six months." And that is the last of another prospector.

Mr. Tarwater's pack appeared to give him undue concern. In opening it he exercised caution verging on stealth, and shot a keen look at Frenchy, who hovered near, as he transferred a small leather bag from it to the bosom of his shirt. Then, apparently persuaded that his act had passed unnoticed, he began to hum, and remarked: "It looks good and smooth right here to spread my bed."

Joe grunted assent.

"But," I expostulated, "It's going to rain. You can smell it."

fifteen feet, with a plaster fireplace opposite the entrance. At each end of the room was a bunk, made of stout oak boards, and a huge cupboard occupied one corner.

It had grown dark, so French Joe lighted the lantern. Thereupon Jimmy got down on his hands and knees and



felt carefully over the floor, explaining, "I'm prospectin' for bumps. Crackee, but boards do get hard on the ribs before mornin'—the very softest of 'em. Yes, sir, they're awful uneven. Ha—here's a smooth one."

And he spread his blankets with the exaggerated attention to detail displayed by the old. That done, down he sat on the edge of his bed and filled a stubby clay pipe with tobacco. Next he removed his shoes for the easement of certain pedal malformations.

"Don't you-all say your prayers?" he inquired, tenderly rubbing one ankle. "It's a big mistake not to, boys. I'm telling you, for I didn't myself till I was more'n forty years old."

French Joe gave vent to one of his jeering laughs, but it left the prospector unruffled.

"Nobody teach'd me," he continued tranquilly. "It just come to me up there in them mountains one day, watching a teeny squirrel. My, it was awful quiet. You could hear the hills whispering to each other. And that's when I saw the Light. What does the Book say? 'I saw an angel standing in the sun.' You boys like a drink?"

He produced a flat pint of mezcal and offered it to us. The fiery liquor brought tears to one's eyes, but the prospector downed three swallows without blinking, or a pause for breath.

"And I tell you what," he added, putting the flask back into his bed, "it was a doggone good thing for me I did learn to say 'em. You bet."

"How was that?"

"Why, me and Bill Smith, we were up yonder in the Cananeas prospectin' for copper, when come a landslide off'n a peak. Wow, how she did come snortin'—rocks as big as this house, men—and sand and gravel. About eight o'clock at night this was, and I was on my knees before we went to bed, so it passed clean over my head. But Bill was standing straight up. You can see the pine cross I put there, right to this day."

Fortified by this proof of the efficacy of prayer, Jimmy now put his pipe away, knelt on the bed and bowed his gray head. Not a move did French Joe make during this ceremony; he sur-

veyed it without a vestige of derision.

"Ever find any gold up in the hills, Meestair Tarwater?" he inquired respectfully.

The prospector was arranging the covers around his shoulders to his liking, and his back was to the Frenchman. He paused a moment, and to me he seemed to be listening to an elusive note in our host's tones, rather than to his words.

"Oh," he replied, "nothing to brag about. Why?"

"Nothing. Fellers often tell that there is much gold hid somewheres about. Me, I think they lie. Vas?" And Joe smiled brilliantly.

"Hem," said the prospector thoughtfully, "it's likely they do."

Joe now passed water around in a gourd, put out the light by a couple of vigorous shakes and crawled into his bunk. He slept in the one to the left of the entrance; I took the other on the right, while the prospector was curled up in front of the fireplace.

"Ever—gee, there's a lot of sand in this blanket, Joe—ever hit a sure-enough mine, Mr. Tarwater?" I asked.

"You bet you. You can gamble I did, Mr. Dan. I done cleaned up a cool sixty thousand cash once. On the May Queen, it was."

Out came Frenchy from the covers, straight as a ramrod.

"Sixty thousand dollairs? Three hundred thousand francs? Sacré—what did you do with him?"

"That was before I got religion," the prospector confessed sadly. He mused a space on the fleeting nature of riches, and then added in self-defense: "But I held out longer'n most. Take of Charlie Jones. He got the same as me, us being pardners, and his was gone in six months. He was a terrible spender, though, Charlie was. I was carefuller than him—mine lasted ten months, all but three days."

With a manner positively diffident, French Joe next inquired: "And then, Meestair Tarwater—what did you do then?"

"Do? Why, went back for more, of course; A man aint ever beat unless he wants to be, boys. No, sir. The earth's

just full of riches, if only a feller knows where to look."

He turned over in an effort to get comfortable and sighed a few times.

"I swan, I can't seem to get sleepy," he complained. "Most generally always I'm off in a second, but to-night I'm restless as an ol' maid who's forgot to look under the bed. Did either of you ever feel like something was going to happen?"

"Not," answered French Joe, "in time for it to do good to me."

"Well, I've got that feeling to-night. Queer, aint it? Consarn, a man's a fool to think in bed. He's just bound to let mean li'le things pester him that oughtn't." And he squirmed fretfully under the covers.

"There's one thing, though," he said next, "that you fellers can bank on. And that's this—the next piece of money ol' Jimmy Tarwater gets his paws on, he wont throw away raising ructions. No, sirree—you'll see him light out to find Tud."

One of the burros wandered up to the door and stuck his patient head inside.

"Get along out, V'let. I declare that critter wont never rest except when she'd ought to be footin' it. Yes, sir—when I make a stake agin, you'll find me act some different."

After a decent interval to ascertain whether he would impart more, Joe inquired: "And who is Tud?"

"Him and me," said Jimmy, "used to be pardners."

Perhaps he felt that we were trying to pry into his personal affairs, for the prospector pulled the blankets up over his head. However, he soon pulled them down again, apparently unable to resist the lure of a subject dear to his heart. He began on it of his own accord.

"You boys just wait. I'll be on Easy Street soon. Look here—pshaw, I reckon I can trust you two—you look honest. Just cast your eye on this, will you? Well, never mind—you can see it in the morning. But it's the real article, gentlemen—gold—genuine. Simon-pure gold. A lump of it, too. I never let it out of reach, you can bet. And

there's bushels more where that come from—just bushels, men. Not a soul on earth except me knows where it is, and as soon as I can prove up on it—"

His pause was eloquent. At mention of gold Frenchy roused and sucked in his breath.

"How much there is, Meestair Tarwater? This gold—how much did you say there was?"

"Oh, a ton or so," said Jimmy indifferently. "It's there in chunks, I tell you. But it'll cost something to get it out. Here's the Gospel truth, fellers—that mine'll make a dozen millionaires."

With a happy sigh, he stretched out on his back.

"But all I want is a hundred thousand. That'll do me fine. It's plenty. With a hundred thousand I can go look for Tud, and maybe find him."

"Where will you look?"

"That's just what I don't know. It's that that worries me. I've hunted around quite a spell, first and last, when I had the money, and once or twice I've heard of Tud in a sort of a way. I tell you what, men—he sat up in his earnestness—"it's my belief that Tud's living with friendly natives somewhere in one of them South Sea islands. It's like he's in cahoots with the chief, or running a saloon or something. I've read of stranger things to happen; yes, sir. And Tud could talk a bird out of a tree if he set his mind to it."

My cough failed to cover French Joe's chuckle, but the old man did not seem to hear it; or, if he did, failed to connect it with anything he had said. He went on complacently: "If I can just find Tud everything'll be all right. I've got enough for both of us in this strike—yes, sir, enough to keep us snug for life. We make a grand team. He was shore a mining man, Tud was. I wonder what he's doing now? Shucks—I'm bound to find him if only I don't give up too soon. Don't you reckon?"

"Certainly you will."

"But what happened, Meestair Tarwater? This friend of yours—Tud—why don't he write? What for has he hid out from you?"

No response—a silence so protracted that it became painful. Fearing that

the prospector was irretrievably offended. I was about to query Joe on the morrow's breakfast, when Tarwater cleared his throat noisily.

"I reckon you had a right to ask that"—the admission came grudgingly. "Yes, you did, after what I'd told you. And I expect I sort of owe it to you—all to tell the rest, though I aint never breathed a word to a soul."

"We don't want to hear anything you don't want to tell."

"Thank you, sir," said he. "No. I'm going to tell you. Maybe it'll ease my mind. For thinking about it month in and month out 'way up there all alone has shore made me want to talk it over with a human. The fact is, men, poor Tud's been afraid to write. That's the reason."

He paused, and to fill in the gap French Joe murmured, "Is that so?"

"There wasn't no real harm in Tud, men. Him and me had been pardners for ten years and never a hard word. But he was a wild boy—Tud *would* drink and gamble, though I begged him time and again to leave it be. He was younger'n me—quite a lot younger—and I felt towards that boy like my own son, almost. Well, sir, Tud got to hanging round with a cheap crowd at the Black Metal Saloon and it wasn't long before he'd spent his share of what we'd taken out of the Blue Bell.

"When he got to drinking, Tud would fight. I got to own up to that—he shore would fight. And being such a big feller, it seemed like nobody could handle him, account of his size. He'd just naturally go plumb out of his head. But

Lord love you, he'd never fight me. Tud wouldn't. He'd be raging mad with drink and all I'd have to say was, 'Stop that now!'"—the prospector barked it out in a treble voice—"just like that, and Tud would quit. He'd quit quick as scat. 'All right, Jimmy,' he'd say."

"But what," persisted the Frenchman, "did your friend run from you for?"

"All because of his drinking and gambling, like I'm telling you. One day he got into a fight at the Black Metal, Tud did, and hurt a feller bad. I expect Tud thought maybe he'd finished him. Anyhow, he lit out without ever saying good-by to any-one, even me. And when I come to check up—pshaw, what made me mad was he should think he wasn't welcome to it. To go off secret from his pardner that away! But I know he figured on paying it back. Ol' Tud wouldn't have touched a cent not his, for anything in the world.

You see how it was, men, don't you?"

"Of course," I said hurriedly.

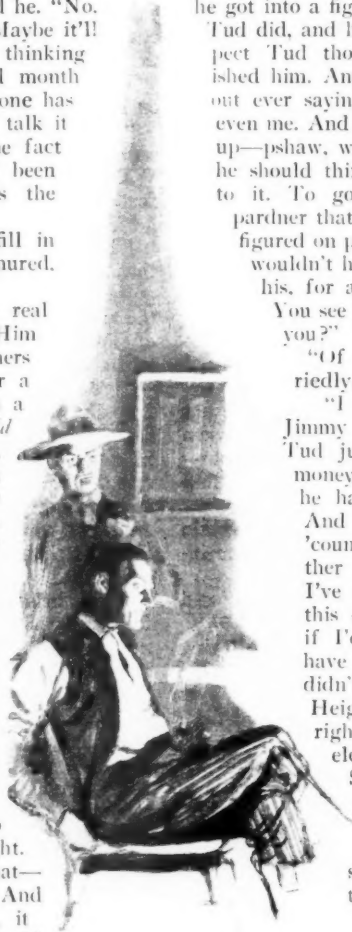
"I knowed you would," Jimmy went on, "because Tud just had to have some money to go away on, and he had to go quick. See? And me not being around, 'count of prospectin' further up crick—I tell you I've felt awful bad about this often. Because maybe if I'd been there I could have helped Tud—the man didn't die or nothing. Heigho—it'll all come right, I reckon. That's eleven years ago, men.

Sometimes I almost give up hope. But

I'm shore to find him some day, don't you think?"

"Surely you will, Mr. Tarwater."

"That," he said simply, "is about all I've got to live



"Ever find any gold up in the hills?"

for. Yes, sir, me and Tui was pardners shore enough."

The hour was late and we now settled determinedly to woo sleep. But it would not come with its usual celerity. There was tension in the air; electric waves seemed to vibrate through the dark. Twice, as I was about to doze off, I woke with a start, limbs rigid, feeling myself falling.

On the second of these nervous starts I became conscious of a subdued movement in the room. It seemed to me that something was stirring, although I could not definitely fix the sound. As I listened, French Joe's bunk creaked; but next minute my surmises were dissipated by hearing him sigh. So once more I turned over and resolutely shut my eyes, and began to count to a thousand.

We had been asleep an hour, or perhaps two, when the clack of a horse's shoe against a stone roused me. A light rain was pattering on the roof.

A rider pulled up close to the door and let out a loud halloo.

"Who—w h a t — h e l l o, who's there?" cried Joe confusedly.

A harsh voice made answer: "I've come back for the night. Can you fix me up? The bridge is down and the river's just runnin' wild."

The Frenchman grumbled something very unlike an invitation and got gingerly out of bed. In his bare feet he stepped to the door. They conferred in undertones.

"All right," Joe ended surlily, going to the table, "you did me mean, but put your horse in the corral. You'll have to spread your bed on the floor, though, Mees-tair Sloan, be-

cause my friend, he has the bunk."

"That suits me," acquiesced the stranger. "All I want is to get fresh air without being rained on. *Muchas gracias*, ol' timer. I didn't mean it about the tobacco. And I'm sorry I kicked you."

Frenchy muttered an obijuration and lighted the lantern, which burned so feebly that objects four feet from it were wholly invisible. Then he went back to bed.

Soon came the man who had found a torrent blocking his path, carrying under his arm a roll of bedding which he dumped on the floor. As he bent above it, there was wafted to me a healthful odor of horse, and I sat up, wishful for a scrutiny of this forceful individual who did not hesitate to demand hospitality of a host he had booted.

In the dim light Sloan loomed like a colossus. Although a full six feet in height, his shoulders and hips were broad out of all proportion. A bushy yellow beard hid the lower part of his face, but his cheekbones were ruddy and his eyes fairly burned.

Brusque as his tone had been, he did his best not to disturb us, but he could muffle his footfalls better than he could control his breathing, which was loud and uneven.

In a trice he was ready. Off came his heavy boots; his coat was rolled into a pillow; out went the lights and he was under the blankets. Silence closed over the room. From the prospector's bed came a soft, regular purring; the little man



He produced a flat pint of mescal and offered it to us.

had not waked. French Joe was breathing in long, whistling intakes.

Our new guest was wakeful. Something seemed to weigh on his mind. He tossed and fidgeted, now throwing back the cover with a fiercely impatient sweep of his arm; again, mumbling savagely under his breath. Then, as though soothed by this fuming, he would grow quiet.

During one of these intervals of repose I was startled almost out of my skin by feeling rough fingers move over my face, and promptly grabbed the hand.

"Hush," somebody whispered, shoving a cold object into my shirt bosom. "Don't be scared. Take this. And don't you on any account let me get to it."

With an effortless motion he freed his wrist and was gone. The object he had forced upon me was an automatic revolver.

Here was a pretty to-do. Did he fear to trust himself with the weapon? If so, what sort of individual were we harboring, there in lonely Cuitaca in the dead of night?

Perspiration broke out all over me as I listened to him fretting and muttering. Presently he was bolt upright, taking a pull at a bottle. Being close to the door, his head was silhouetted. A moment and he leaned back, yawned loudly and seemed to relax.

And I waited, wide-eyed, for what might befall. There was nothing else to do but wait, tingling with apprehension at the slightest sound.

How long he remained still I could not say. It seemed an eternity before a movement came from his bed. Then he stirred cautiously; next he waited, listening; and presently he began to crawl across the floor on his hands and knees. It had come. My worst fears were realized—we had given refuge to a killer. Softly I sat up with the gun ready, because he was making for French Joe's bunk.

My wonder was that Joe did not hear him, for as he moved he groped about on the bare boards. Something rattled—he had run afoul of the lantern. Instead of this disconcerting him, it appeared to

be what he wanted, for he got stealthily to his feet and carried it to the table. There he struck a match and applied it to the wick, which was slow in catching.

For a moment he held the light high over his head, staring all about the room. He was a sight to appall: a shock of red hair tumbled down over his eyes, which were glaring balefully; forehead and cheeks shone crimson above the yellow beard; his mouth was open, the lips bared back from the teeth; and his body was crouched for a spring.

Should I shoot, or wait what he might do? As I hesitated, he spoke. And his composure startled me worse than a shout. In a low, tremulous voice rendered doubly ferocious by his effort to make it steady, he addressed French Joe's bunk: "You sorry bound, where's that gun I gave you?"

The Frenchman raised his bald head from the covers, wide awake on the instant, and gazed fearfully on this apparition.

"Gun, m'sieu?" he quavered. "What gun? I know nothing of it, m'sieu, on my word."

"Don't lie to me." He slowly lowered the lantern to the table, his muscles taut as a sprinter's on the mark. "I put it in your hands not an hour ago. You know I did. What're you shaking for? Ah—you're trying to steal it. Yes, you are. Where is my gun, I say?"

It may be that Joe actually phrased a sentence—all I could catch was a doleful whimper. He was simply paralyzed with fright. And the visitor spread out his huge hands, the fingers crooked like talons, and advanced a step, his head low between his shoulders.

With the squawk of a despairing hen, French Joe flopped from the bunk and made a feeble attempt to reach the door, but the bearded giant bounded on him. The lantern gave a final sputter and went out. We were in pitch darkness.

A thin note above the crash of their bodies on the floor, came Frenchy's cry for help. Next, a soft thud as of a clump of dirt dropped; then tremendous heavings and lurchings and the scraping of bare feet on the boards. The yellow-bearded man made hideous, snarling noises in his throat as he fought,

"He's—choking—me," came Joe's despairing appeal.

A shot in the dark could not be risked. I sprang to the table for matches, but they had been swept away. Then a gurgling moan reached me that submerged all fear, and I leaped wildly for the blurred outline in front.

A grunt and savage snort, and he went face downward on top of his helpless victim; but the weapon with which I had hoped to beat him over the head was knocked from my grasp by the impact. And there I was on his back, striving with my puny strength to pin his arms and keep him down.

"So," he gasped, roaring backward, "you would. would you?"

Did you ever hit a man for all that was in you, putting every ounce of weight and will behind it, and then have him come boring in for more without even wincing? If you have, you know the sick feeling of helplessness that came over me when the drink-crazed brute gave a heave of one mighty shoulder, reached around with his left hand and got me by the leg. With his fingers around my right ankle, he tore me from his back and threw me heavily to the floor. And next instant two hundred and twenty pounds of demoniacal rage crushed me to the boards. French Joe lay passively under my feet.

I clutched at his wrists, tore wildly at his fingers, but could not hold him off. His strength was the strength of madness. Remorselessly his thumb bore

down on my throat, and the dark began to turn red.

As in a dream I became aware of somebody at the table, striking a match. It flared, flickered, held steady and grew strong. The giant straddling me was working harder as he felt my resistance slacken.

"You will, will you?" he kept repeating. "I'll—fix—you—too."

A slight, frail, half-clad figure stooped above us.

"Stop that now!" piped the prospector shrilly.

Then a wonderful thing happened. The fingers digging into my windpipe slowly relaxed their terrible pressure. The blessed air rushed into my lungs. All the ferocity seemed suddenly to well out of my assailant. The gorilla-like arms dropped inertly to his sides; his great body straightened.

Turning his head, he fixed dull, frightened eyes on the prospector, and blinked.

"All right, Jimmy," he said meekly.

Under my feet the Frenchman stirred and groaned. His movement dislodged a heavy lump from under his shoulder, which rolled a few inches. It was wrapped in a leather bag. The giant touched it curiously with his toe, as he sat on my chest.

"Say," he asked, "whose gold is this? Yours, Jimmy? That Frenchman sure hung to it. I thought I'd have to kill him to get it away from him. Better put it away now, Jimmy."

*This generation of writers has produced few
more expert than*

E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

*His story, "A Lesson to Lionel Cutts," in the
August Red Book is one of the most
vivid stories of the year.*



Tango!

By W. Carey Wonderly

Author of "Manhattan Mad," "The Broadway Heart," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY COYLE CHRISTY TINCHER

AS Mr. Wonderly has caught the spirit that lies beneath the glitter of the "White Way" in his wonderful novels of Broadway, so in this short story he has the real spirit of the dance craze which swept the country; the spirit of Youth; sometimes Youth disguised by gray hair, but Youth nevertheless.

IT was scarcely characteristic of Roger Everett that he should give a second thought to an anonymous communication. And when that letter attacked his wife, it became almost beyond belief that he should give it credulity even for a moment. Yet that is exactly what he had done. At half after four he left his offices, downtown, and hailing a taxicab, was driven away to a country in which he felt himself a stranger, that country which has its center at Broadway and Forty-second Street. For Everett had been born and raised on a farm in the Middle West; he hadn't come to New York until grown to manhood, and now he was approaching fifty.

Stepping from his cab at the corner, he walked slowly, almost unwillingly, down the cross street toward the huge electric sign, not yet lighted, which spelled out

the rendezvous. "Palais du Paradis." Everett stopped short and regarded the billboards on either side of the entrance with an unpleasant frown. They announced the joint engagement of Monsieur Raoul, direct from the Pré-Catalan, and Miss Jean Mayo, the favorite of the smart set; also, a thé-dansant each afternoon with Monsieur Raoul and Miss Mayo, as well as dancing from five to closing hour each day.

Palais du Paradis! Monsieur Raoul! This, then, was the rendezvous named in the unsigned letter.

Everett dropped back for a second and observed the people who were flocking into the place. There were few men; most of them were women—in age, from sixteen to sixty, he reflected cynically; many of them came in private cars, others in taxicabs; those who arrived on foot were in the minority.

The Palais du Paradis had every appearance of being in high favor with the smart set.

Everett had seen too many of this type of women in his wife's drawing room not to recognize their class distinction now. They bore the hall marks of Fifth Avenue and not of Broadway. He was surprised, even bewildered, when he followed in their wake to the elevators.

The room where the tea dances were held was on the second floor, a huge apartment, wonderfully decorated, and, at five o'clock in the afternoon, filled with several hundred people. Already many couples were dancing, although not a few sat around at tables and gossiped and watched and sipped occasionally from elegant cups. Everett circled the outskirts, his face flushed, his eyes bright, very awkward and unhappy. Out in the middle of the room a thousand lights twinkled gaily, but back from the dancing floor, where the tables were, the lamps were shaded with scarlet silk so that it became more difficult all the time to recognize a face in the Oriental twilight. Everett was not sorry for this, although it defeated his purpose. Still, he wasn't keen on being pointed out in this place; he rather felt that his presence here was an insult to his manhood; fifty-year-old Roger Everett at a tea dance with a lot of silly women!

He wandered about aimlessly enough, watching the dancers as well as the occupants at the tables. No one spoke to him; the women who fre-

quented the Palais du Paradis did not come with the idea of scraping an acquaintance with a gentleman. This was Fifth Avenue, not Broadway. A rendezvous for the smart, yes; but not a rendezvous for the vulgar.

Presently he noticed a little string of women waiting, patiently or otherwise, as the case—and their temperaments—might be, at the head of the room. And to each, in turn, a male dancer came off the floor and seizing her, carried her out in the middle of the stream where, regardless of age or anything else, he whirled her around and around like a Mad Mullah. The man was Monsieur Raoul, of course.

Everett pushed forward almost to the guard-rail, Monsieur Raoul!

He saw a tall, very slim young man, with all the grace and elegance of the



Everett dropped back for a second and observed the people who were flocking into the place.

born Parisian, although his features, and his voice, when he spoke, betrayed the place of his nativity. Perhaps this is why he spoke so seldom, merely smiling his answers, for Monsieur Raoul, when alone with Miss Mayo, often talked over old times round "Thoid Avenoo" or "Foist." For all his grace, there was nothing offensive about the young man; he was faultlessly groomed, ever ready with his good-natured smile, ever pleasant with his manner and bearing. All the same, it filled Everett with amazement to see well bred women standing in a broad line for the privilege of dancing a few minutes with this fellow. He couldn't understand it; it disgusted him. For these were not shop girls; women of fifty, mothers surely, possibly grandmothers; and again, *débutantes*, or fresh from the schoolroom—his own women kind, begging for a whirl with this smiling mountebank.

They seemed mad about him. Everett had heard of such cases in regard to an actor, but this pseudo monsieur—Of course it was the dance as much as the man, this tango. . . . Tango! Beatrice, his wife, a woman of forty, spoke of it incessantly and even danced it, he believed, in the houses of her friends, while his daughter, Ethel, a child of sixteen, lamented the fact that she was not permitted to join a class to which a number of her school chums belonged. . . . Tango!

He watched Monsieur Raoul gyrate a charmingly pretty young girl out in the center of the floor. For a second only they lingered; then, up and down, back and forth, a slight dip, gaily, lightly, twice around the room before they stopped and the man changed partners. Everett didn't find the dance so immodest, as it seemed undignified. How grown women—! And with a man whom they didn't know from Adam! It came very close to being downright ludicrous. For the first time he laughed, and this with the anonymous letter in his pocket. Above all things Beatrice possessed pride, along with an almost masculine sense of humor.

He turned away, relieved, after all, glad he had come. He felt satisfied—without looking further. . . . That

very pretty girl, spun round and round like a top, twisted and jerked, jumped up and down, and then dropped, almost without a word, all out of breath, all hot and flushed and clothes awry, while Monsieur grabbed another devotee and repeated the performance. . . . Not Beatrice! A little later, perhaps, he would show her the letter which had arrived at his office that morning, and they would laugh together over his visit to the Palais du Paradis—which had proved anything but a paradise to him. As for his suspicions—well, a man who is jealous at fifty will remain the constant lover to eternity. Beatrice would understand; Beatrice was more than passing clever.

He started toward the elevators when somebody called him by name. It was a masculine voice. He turned quickly, a trifle vexed. Emory Catherwood held out his hand.

"Who 'd have thought it?" he roared. "Well, in the words of the song, 'everybody's doin' it,' but hanged if I dreamed of finding you here, Everett. A tea dance! Where's your partner? Not alone? Then it must be the little Jean that draws you hither, youngster."

"Quit it!" said Everett, laughing in spite of himself. "If you insist upon knowing what brings me here, I'll get up and speak right out in meeting—Madam Curiosity!"

"Ah," cried Catherwood, "where is she? I'd like to meet the lady!"

"You old sinner!"

"Sinner, yes, but old—I pass, I'm centuries younger than my own son, who is twenty-five. You're not going? You mustn't! Stay and see the fun; I'm dancing with little Jean next."

Everett stopped and smiled in an incredulous manner.

"Oh, I mean it all right, all right!" cried Catherwood. He clapped Everett on the back and the two men started up the room toward the music balcony. Catherwood was a trifle older than Everett, and short and plump and rosy, like a baby. Also, his hair was snow white and very curly and he smiled as often as Monsieur Raoul himself. Furthermore, he was a banker and a millionaire.

"Emory," said Everett, as they reached the top of the room, "I think I had better turn tail and go home. This is no place for me. I can't dance; I don't drink tea, and—and—I only dropped in for a few minutes because I had heard so much talk of the place. I'm not the godless sinner you are."

"Then you ought to be ashamed to confess it! Never mind. Jean will take you around—they teach you all the new steps at these *thés-dansants*. And Jean is some teacher. Come along."

Everett crossed to a table, still protesting.

"I wouldn't go out on that floor for a million, Emory," he said.

"And I wouldn't stay off for a million," laughed Catherwood.

They sat down at the table and Catherwood whispered an order to a waiter who appeared as if by magic.

"Jean's dancing with a woman now—see her?" Catherwood said, craning his neck to follow the couple up the floor. "She doesn't like that, and seldom the women come to her to dance. Raoul's the boy. Lord, what a following! How'd you like to be in his shoes, eh? Pretty soft for the kid. They say he gets three hundred a week—for stepping with the flower of little old New York! But he's made the place—he and Jean. She gets hers at night, all the club registers, the Avenue Johnnies. That's why I come of an afternoon—not many men and I get all the dances I can stand; at night I wouldn't get a look-in. You haven't a son, have you, Everett?"

"No."

"Mine's here every night, winds up here. Jean trots with me of an afternoon and with sonny of an evening. The family alone could keep her busy, eh? When she comes off this time, I'll introduce you."

Everett strangled a desire to tell him that he needn't bother.

"I've been watching that fellow, that Monsieur Raoul," he said presently and with a certain awkwardness. "What is he, and what are those women thinking about to permit him to handle them the way he does?"

Catherwood laughed good-naturedly.

"Of course I'm not a mind reader."

he confessed, "but I'm willing to wager there's not a woman here who wouldn't give her hat to dance with Raoul. Oh, he's a regular fellow. Was a waiter—or a barber—barber, I think, and Jean a manicurist in the same shop. Oh, not married, no-o! Sure, the women are crazy over him—pretty soft, pretty soft."

The waiter returned with a tea tray, set it upon the table, and took his departure.

"I don't drink that," said Everett, as Catherwood got busy with the cups.

"Oh, I rather think you do," grinned he. Lifting the lid of the pot, he winked, for no steam escaped. Then he poured out a cupful of the liquid and handed it to Everett. "This is a tea dance," he observed wickedly. "Note the *Sèvres* and *Ceylon*, old top."

Everett first minutely inspected, then raised the stuff to his lips. The delicate china held a highball. He said nothing, only looking his surprise. He was learning something new every second. Paradise forsooth!

"Right-o?" asked Catherwood. "Cup get in the way?"

"Good!"

"Of course it tastes better in the regular way, the same as it tastes better here than it does at the clubs or restaurants."

Everett leaned forward.

"Are all these women and girls drinking—this too?" he demanded, suddenly.

"Well, I wouldn't say that. Some prefer cocktails. But everything here of an afternoon is served in this fashion. Oh, I'm not saying all these women drink—Jean doesn't. Not for her morals but for her complexion. And they say Raoul doesn't, on the floor."

"How those women can dance with him, have him touch them—!"

"You should worry—I learned that from my office boy."

"Very likely. Haven't they any self-respect, Emory?"

Catherwood laughed.

"Why so serious. Mustn't the wife play, the same as the husband? Really, I think there's little harm in the thing. It may be undignified—"

"It is, it is beyond the question of a

doubt!" interposed Everett. "Gaze around you, Emory, at some of these women—white-haired, seemingly of gentle birth—"

Catherwood laughed and began to hum with the music:

"England lost her dignity,
So did France and Germany—

"At least," he added, "it's better than bridge, at which our womenfolk lost oodles of money before Monsieur Raoul and his kind became the rage. And these dancing boys are not so great a menace as cards. Raoul is going to marry little Jean—some day."

"Well matched, I dare say," Everett nodded.

Catherwood smiled and said nothing, for at that moment Miss Mayo dropped her partner and came slowly toward the table where the two men were sitting. She was a pretty, graceful girl in a dainty white dancing frock such as Everett's own daughter might wear. At her approach, Catherwood rose to his feet and there remained nothing for Everett to do but follow his friend's example.

She shook his hand prettily, and sitting down with them, refused all refreshment, even tea. Catherwood resumed his highball but Everett's cup remained untouched for the rest of the afternoon. Presently she asked him if he danced and he replied that he did not. Catherwood suggested that she should show him the new steps.

"Why, certainly, Mr. Everett!" she cried, rising lightly to her feet.

"Please, Miss Mayo," he said, shaking his head. "It's a little late in the day to teach an old dog—"

"Stuff and nonsense!" protested Jean, holding out a hand.

"All ye who enter Paradis leave age behind," grinned Catherwood.

At length he rose because it seemed the easiest thing to do; both the girl and the man had been insistent. He felt very foolish, very wooden as she clasped him with her arms. His smooth, grave face flushed slightly, much to Catherwood's delight. Jean pretended not to notice his embarrassment.

"Eight steps forward, then eight back," said she; "turn around four times and then repeat. Let's try it, Mr. Everett. Now—!"

He grew hot and uncomfortable trying to avoid stepping on her feet. From the first he had become confused and she had been obliged to pull him this way and that. After the second turn, he stopped and stood facing her, a little out of breath, thoroughly miserable, since he was sure that every pair of eyes in the room was focused on him. As a matter of fact, they had gone scarcely a dozen paces from the guard-rail.

"You're very kind but really it's no use," he told her, half pleading for his release.

"Oh, Mr. Everett! If you honest Injun don't know a thing about it, why, I think you're doing wonderfully! And I know. You're ever so much lighter on your feet than Mr. Catherwood is, too. I'd say you'll make a fine dancer."

"At my age?" he scoffed.

"What's age got to do with it?" she returned sweetly. "Dancing keeps a man's figure trim too. Of course you're not overweight, but round forty most men begin to take on flesh—"

"I'm nearly fifty," Everett confessed.

"Now! Why do all men try to poke fun at me? I know better than that."

The music struck up the "Horse Trot" and she extended her arms invitingly. After a moment's hesitation he yielded and they repeated the first figure of the dance, this time with better success.

But it was hard work, the hardest Everett had done in several years, and Jean too was all out of breath when presently he suggested that they sit down for a rest.

"You're a wonder!" came Catherwood's greeting. "Miss Jean, you're some little teacher."

"Oh, Mr. Everett's a born dancer, that's all," smiled she.

"I felt like a born fool," confessed the pupil.

"Didn't look like one," cried his friend heartily.

Jean pointed to a couple just opposite their table.



"Of course I'm not a mind reader," confessed Catherwood, "but I'm willing to wager there's not a woman here who wouldn't give her hat to dance with Raoul."

"Look!" commanded she. "Watch them! That's Monsieur Raoul, from the Pré-Catalan. See how he moves his feet—holds his lady? That's the proper wrinkle, Mr. Everett. Believe me, Monsieur knows all there is to know about dancing. And his partner, she's not bad either."

Everett said nothing. The lady dancing with Monsieur Raoul was his wife.

II

At forty Beatrice Everett retained a goodly portion of that Dresden prettiness which had won Roger's heart nearly twenty years before. Her youthfulness seemed downright uncanny when one remembered her daughter, for Ethel was a slim, straight girl of sixteen, taller than her mother. But in spite of her blonde coloring and ingénue air, people had long ago put Mrs. Everett down as

"sensible." She had never been known to lionize a new pianist or portrait painter, and she only turned to cards after making sure that her husband's house was in perfect order. In short, Beatrice's common sense saved her despite her hair and eyes. And then the dancing craze seized her. . . . Tango!

It was never quite clear to her when, or how, she began it; she hadn't been overly fond of dancing as a young girl. But at forty the fever burned in her veins; she went from house to house where there was sure to be the newest dances performed, and presently, becoming more difficult to please in the matter of partners, since she danced exquisitely, she sought the hotels and restaurants where she was allowed the dubious honor of whirling with professionals.

After a little she came regularly to the tea dances at the Palais du Paradis.

For that matter, so did many women of her age and acquaintance; she didn't try deliberately to hide the fact, although, possibly, it was the last thing in the world which she would have cared to have her husband, and her household, know. There was nothing clandestine about these afternoon dances, for Beatrice was above common intrigue, but they seemed so frivolous, so wanting in dignity, and always she had been known as a sensible woman. It is doubtful if she would have recognized Monsieur Raoul away from the Palais. He was nothing to her, save as a most desirable partner; an animated clothes horse would have pleased her as well had it possessed the grace and agility of the smiling ex-barber. Beatrice Everett was in love with—dancing!

She had driven up to the door of the Palais du Paradis at five o'clock that afternoon, a habit which she exercised three times in every week, and meeting a few women whom she knew, had had her tea with them until her turn arrived to dance with Monsieur Raoul. She felt no hesitancy in going out on the floor with him; hadn't each of her friends gladly availed themselves of a similar opportunity only a few minutes since? And weren't other women awaiting their turn after her? Beatrice would go home directly she had finished the single dance with the star; she had no desire to trot or waltz with any of the "pet cats" some of the women had brought with them. Once and once only Monsieur Raoul had complimented her on the steps and henceforth she separated the wheat from the chaff. Her gossiping friends back at the tea table saw this: Beatrice Everett came three times a week to this place merely to dance for five minutes with a man whom she considered her equal in cleverness, and so far she seemed satisfied with her mite.

"But later," declared Mrs. Symington, "as her appetite increases, you will find that one dance of an afternoon no longer appeases her, and since Raoul can give her only so much time, she will seek out another floor, and then another, going from here to there, doing possibly three or four of an afternoon, and every afternoon in the week!"

Pretty Mrs. Crosby patted her mouth with her soft pink palm.

"Once upon a time," she yawned, "we women turned to drink, or love, after thirty; now it's dancing."

"Raoul is certainly very good looking," remarked Mrs. Ford. "Although I don't believe he is any more Parisian than—I am."

"Oh, Lord, no," laughed Mrs. Crosby. "His French is unspoken."

Mrs. Symington shook her head emphatically. She was older than the others and inclined to stoutness, but that didn't keep her off the floor. She had been known to fight brazenly with a total stranger for her turn to whirl about the room in the arms of the professional from the Pré-Catalan.

"Stuff and nonsense!" she cried now, rather angrily. "Don't pile up *that* sin against any of us, Aline. None of us is in love with the fellow—it's his legs! If my husband could dance as well, I'd like every bit as well to have him for a partner. The men may come here to dance with a pretty girl—I had heard that Jean girl is in great demand at night—but we women come here to dance with a man who has only two feet. . . . Beatrice is a wonder. Look!"

"She has a grown daughter too," observed Aline Ford.

"A mere school chit," Mrs. Crosby threw in. "I've never seen her but I do know she isn't 'out' yet. Oh, Beatrice isn't a grandmother by any means, my dear. Fanny is right—she is well worth looking at."

Mrs. Ford was silent, but only for a moment or two.

"What is her husband like, Rita?" she began presently.

"Like all men who spend thirty hours in every twenty-four downtown," retorted Mrs. Crosby. "If our husbands had hairlips or hunchbacks we couldn't keep them more successfully in the background, now could we? Of course Beatrice has got a husband—I am positive for I met him once or twice at dinner, but I'm sure he doesn't dance—one never hears him mentioned anywhere."

Monsieur Raoul had nothing to say to Beatrice this afternoon and this pleased her just as well. Without the

music and the movement she couldn't have stood the star's East Side brogue, but, happily, he didn't divine this; he was merely thinking of pretty Jean Mayo, who was just then smiling up in the face of a grizzly old dub who didn't know the difference between a tango and a waltz. This "grizzly old dub" happened to be Roger Everett, but how was Monsieur Raoul to know that? He didn't even know the name of the lady with whom he was dancing—and he didn't want to. However, he did wonder if Jean took as little personal interest in her patrons. Right here I will answer for Miss Mayo—she did.

The man's concentrated gaze at last compelled her to follow his glance—yes, he was looking at the little danseuse, and Beatrice smiled. It was quite immaterial to her that he should be thinking of another woman so long as his day dreams didn't affect his stepping. Jean was quite pretty too—she looked again, and then suddenly realized that Raoul was gazing not at the girl but at the man whom she was attempting to teach. Of course! How droll! And what a fool a man appeared, to get up on the floor and allow a person to try to show him the steps before a roomful of people! They backed, circled, and danced nearer to Jean; Beatrice Everett turned her head slightly in order to get a better view of the man who was struggling with a first lesson. Their eyes met as she dipped past in Raoul's arms; he was her husband.

Her first thought was of herself, her appearance, how she looked in her husband's eyes with this ex-barber, this pseudo Frenchman. She, Beatrice Everett, a wife and a mother, a sensible woman! Ah, that was it, a woman of good, common sense—in spite of her Dresden beauty. Roger had always respected her intellect; in earlier days he had often asked her opinion before he opened or closed a deal, and now to find her here, in this manner! It seemed as if he must feel that all along she had been wearing a mask which he was permitted to peep behind for the first time. No thought of evil stirred her, for there was no evil in her heart. It never occurred to her that Roger could pos-

sibly misconstrue her dancing with this Monsieur Raoul. He would believe her undignified, frivolous, and nothing else. She couldn't conceive of his thinking anything else because it wasn't in her. She was mad about the dance, not the dancer.

That she had caught him at the same game made no difference; *she* had never set *him* on a pedestal. Happily, for hers was a clean mind, she never connected his being there, even remotely, with Jean Mayo. He must have come to the Palais for the same thing which had drawn her there—the best dancer in New York.... And he had looked such an idiot! Heavens, if she thought that she appeared in that light!

What to do, what to say? She hated to come down off her pedestal. She had found it very pleasant to bask in the comfort of her title of a clever woman. After to-day Roger would never ask her opinion again—although, come to think of it, he hadn't of late anyway. Perhaps he had known all along of her coming to the Paradis; perhaps he had seen her dance with Raoul before this afternoon; she had never seen him, but then it was very difficult to single out a person in that vast crowd.... What must she do, say!

The music stopped and Monsieur Raoul left her with a bow and a smile, stepping forward to claim his next partner. Beatrice started toward the table where she had left her friends and it was not until she was half-way across the room that she saw their places were empty—they had gone home. She was sorry and yet relieved. She supposed she must speak to Roger.... Yes, that would simplify matters later at home....

She turned and retraced her steps toward the table where he and Catherwood now lingered. She even hummed a snatch of song, although her heart was thumping madly. Frivolous, undignified, she, the mother of a sixteen-year-old daughter! She was very close to the guard-rail at that moment and she raised her eyes to follow Monsieur Raoul down the floor. A graceful, even wonderful dancer. And none of the women danced as well as she did, not even Jean Mayo.

She glanced at the girl in his arms now, a slim, straight creature, very young and rather tall—Ethel! For a brief second she leaned against the nearest table, closing her eyes to shut out the picture. The fellow was dancing with her own daughter!

A moment later her mind was made up. She waited patiently until the dance was over, then called Ethel to come to her.

The girl came slowly, even languidly, toward her, frowning, sullen and unlovely. Beatrice thought she must be badly frightened; she scarcely knew her own daughter. There was nothing of fear in Ethel's eyes as she faced her mother—rather a half contemptuous gleam of sheer bravado. She stopped beside her, still sullen, still silent, waiting.

Beatrice hadn't expected just this.

"I am surprised—shocked!" she said at last.

"You needn't be," replied Ethel; "I've been here since four-thirty."

Mrs. Everett paled a little, more at the tone than the words.

"What do you think Mrs. Symington, or Mrs. Ford, thought? I am not sure that they saw you," she added quickly, "but if they had happened to come across you here, dancing with that man—"

"You mean Monsieur Raoul, the one you were dancing with?" cut in the girl.

"Ethel! Listen to me. I will not tolerate such language from you. I think you must be out of your mind. Have you no sense of decency? Don't you realize what you have done?—and what I am trying to do for you?" she added, as an after-thought, "Your father is here this afternoon. We came on a special mission—"

Ethel jerked her shoulders pettishly.

"Oh, Mother," said she, "Just as if I haven't watched you both all afternoon! And you didn't come together. You were here for half an hour before Dad arrived. And he didn't see you until you got up to dance with Raoul. I think *that's* scandalous! He's young enough to be your son. All these ridiculous old women here—"

"Hush! Hush!"

"Oh, I will—since Father's come. I

don't care what you and he say, or plan. I will dance with Monsieur Raoul!" she burst forth passionately. "I am the best girl dancer on the Palais floor—he said so! I won't be frightened or punished like a child. I will dance with Monsieur—"

Roger Everett had come up, and Ethel, breaking off, started ahead toward the cloak room. Husband and wife followed slowly.

There was an awkward little moment, each waiting for the other to begin, to give the cue to the scene. Remembering that she was a sensible woman, Beatrice thought quickly, and almost gave up in despair until she got a glimpse of Roger's face. He looked, if possible, more embarrassed even than she. So she began:

"I am sorry to have you find us here to-day this way, Roger," she said. "I don't know what you must think,"—she waited for the briefest second, then went on—"of Ethel. Hers is not an uncommon case, from what I hear. When I was her age I worshipped at the shrine of Kyrle Bellew, but dancers, not actors, are now the rage. And Ethel is very young, a mere child."

"Yes, of course," he replied, thoroughly mystified.

They had strolled to the door of the cloak-room, where Ethel was to meet them with her mother's coat and furs.

"When the child makes her debut, things of course will be different," Mrs. Everett resumed. "But we can't expect our friends now to ask a tall, awkward schoolgirl to their parties simply because she is wild about dancing. And she doesn't care for the children's entertainments. Ethel first came here, simply as a lark, with some of the girls from Madame Cheronnière's school. That dancing fellow complimented her on her grace—fancy that, Roger!—and I rather expect he says the same thing to every woman he dances with. Of course *that* turned Ethel's head. She has been coming here ever since, in secret. I only learned to-day—"

Everett cut in rather breathlessly.

"How did you learn?" he demanded.

Beatrice flushed; she hadn't expected such interest on Roger's part. Outside

of his business, few things interested him.

"Why, a telephone message," she answered at last. "The person wouldn't give a name but I fancy it was one of the teachers at Madame's. The voice asked me if I was aware of the fact that Ethel came to the Palais du Paradis to dance with a professional. Of course I didn't say that I was shocked beyond measure. But I came here to see for myself."

Everett stroked his chin thoughtfully. He was not a suspicious man, and to-day he felt that he was a guilty one. Presently he said:

"I was wondering if the same person could have written the anonymous letter to me."

Beatrice swallowed hard; her lips seemed parched.

"What kind of letter was it?" she asked, after a second.

"Unsigned, of course. It merely warned—it merely stated that you came here every afternoon to dance with Monsieur Raoul."

"I!"

"Yes... At least, it was written 'Mrs. Everett.'"

"It must be 'Miss Everett'—either they have written it incorrectly or you have made the mistake in reading it," Beatrice cried. "You saw Ethel dancing with that awful man—"

"Yes, yes."

"I had been sitting with Mrs. Symington and Mrs. Ford for a half-hour before I saw the child. I was so afraid they'd see! Thank heaven they went home before Ethel began to dance... Have you destroyed the letter? May I see it?"

Everett gave it to her in silence. Beatrice read the brief lines at a glance—and she recognized the writing!

Do you know that Mrs. Everett goes every afternoon to the Palais du Paradis to dance with Monsieur Raoul?

A FRIEND.

It seemed as if an icy hand clutched at Beatrice's heart, but she recalled suddenly that she was a clever woman, and she said:

"I am sure it is from the same person who telephoned to me about Ethel. They mean Miss Everett... Don't scold her, Roger. I'll talk to her myself."

She turned; Ethel had thrust her stole and muff into her hands. There was a



"I come here every time I get a chance—I'm not ashamed of it!"

look on the girl's face which she didn't like, the full lips curling, the eyes, contemptuous. For a second they gazed at each other in silence; then Ethel, averting her head, caught a glimpse of Monsieur Raoul dancing with a pretty young woman in pink. Her eyes kindled.

"They didn't mean Miss Everett at all," she cried passionately. "I come here every time I get a chance—I'm not ashamed of it! But they meant just what they said in that letter to you, Dad—"

Mrs. Everett—"Mother!" She began to sob brokenly. "I know because I—I wrote the letter."

"I know it was horrid of me, but I am crazy about Monsieur Raoul—I love him *intensely*. And when Mother danced with him she used to smile at him—and he smiled back. It nearly *killed* me! Oh, of course, you don't appreciate what I am saying! But if you were a girl and had danced just once with Monsieur—"

Beatrice took the girl's hands, petting them tenderly. She understood—now if Roger could only be made to see. And she forgave Ethel the letter even as she sought forgiveness for the lie. It is so hard to put aside one's title of a really sensible woman!

She caught her husband's eyes.

"I didn't want you to think me frivolous," she whispered. "I felt, when I first saw you, that I'd rather have you find me dead than here, dancing with a paid performer. And so I lied. There was no telephone call. I didn't see Ethel until after I had found you with—"

"With a paid performer," he ended gently.

They walked toward the elevators, Ethel going on ahead.

"I am worried about her," said the mother presently. "Not that I think she will do anything more foolish than come here to dance with that fellow, but—"

"She should be forbidden to come," said Everett.

"Of course! But would that do any real, any lasting good? It is not the man, Roger; it is dancing—"

"This tango," he suggested.

Beatrice smiled.

"Exactly! Ethel is crazy about it and not about Monsieur Raoul. I know because—I am."

"You dance very beautifully, Trix."

She flushed with pleasure.

"Nonsense," she cried, nevertheless. "Why, I am forty!"

"You dance beautifully," he insisted. "I—I was surprised. Even Miss Jean isn't more graceful."

She preened herself like a peafowl.

"You seemed to be getting along rather nicely yourself, Roger. Is Miss Mayo teaching you some new steps?"

"Teaching me all the steps," he re-

plied, with a laugh. "I was never on a floor before to-day."

"Why, I can't believe it!" she cried.

"It's true. Catherwood made me get up with her. She says I ought to make a good dancer. But that is foolishness at my age—"

"At your age!" smiled Beatrice. "Pray what is your age?—anything less than a hundred?... You know, Roger, you never took on flesh as so many men do at forty—you are ridiculously young looking for your years—to be the father of Ethel. I was watching you out on the floor... You don't get up to the Athletic Club every day any more, do you? They say dancing is just as good an exercise—"

He rubbed his chin ruefully.

"No, I don't get up to the Club every day—I don't have the time; but I ought to. I'd hate like the mischief to get fat. Trix—you know what you've always said about fat men—"

"And it's the truth!" she interposed emphatically.

He glanced around at the people, some dancing, some waiting for the elevators.

"Seems like rather a new sort here," he whispered.

"Charming! Did I tell you I had tea with Mrs. Symington and Mrs. Ford and Mrs. Crosby? Yes... If Ethel must dance, I'd rather she came here than anywhere else."

"It's pretty nice," Everett observed. "Of course she musn't come alone. And you are her mother—"

Beatrice nodded.

"I wouldn't mind giving her three afternoons a week, say from four-thirty to six. She will have the opportunity of meeting some charming people. Mrs. Symington—couldn't you manage to drop in once in a while, Roger?"

"I?"

"Certainly!"

"Really, Trix—"

"It would do you good—exercise and relaxation. A man of your age puts on flesh so rapidly."

"Well, of course—"

Ethel cut in sharply.

"Please come on," cried she. "That's the third elevator we've missed!"

The Man of It

By Thomas
Gray Fessenden

Author of
"That Matter of the
Pompeys," etc.



ILLUSTRATED BY G. TYSON

It was only a question
of seconds.

RISKING one's life comes to be a part of routine with firemen. That's why we all thrill as we see these Soldiers of the City going into action. But there's another side to their lives; the home side; and that is the side we seldom see. Mr. Fessenden gives you a glimpse in this new story of the "Smoke Eaters."

THE tapper above the trick-desk began banging its harsh notes. Automatically the stall doors slid noiselessly open. There were a great pounding of hoofs on the truck-room floor, three distinct flashes of gray, the click of snap-catches at collar and girth. Then the three big grays of Truck Sixty-three stood stamping the floor with uneasy hoofs and making playful passes at one another with sundry snorts and squeals and the jangling accompaniment of metal harness-mountings.

Box 538 was in, and according to the running cards Sixty-three "rolled" on a second alarm from that box.

At the desk beneath the tapper, Larry Bogan set down the box-number and the time in the record-book. Then he picked up the telephone on the desk before him and resumed the conversation which the sounding of the tapper had interrupted.

"Uh-huh!—Yep—Alarm just come in and I had to set it down. —Uh-huh!—"

He listened intently to the voice at

the other end of the wire, his cap pushed far back on his head until the visor stood straight up from the middle of his red-thatched scalp. Deep lines showed on his freckled face. A scowl, growing momentarily deeper, puckered his forehead.

Jimmy Breen, Sixty-three's driver, who had hit the rubber mat at the base of the sliding-pole almost with the first pound of hoofs on the truck-room floor, now walked slowly about the three impatiently waiting horses, rubbing the sleep from his eyes as he assured himself that all was as it should be with every polished catch and buckle.

At the desk, Larry's monosyllabic side of the conversation went on monotonously.

"Yep... Who?... Oh, yep... Sure ... Lord! At half-past eleven? Doctor *who?* Come again! I don't get ye yet! Who? I can't get that name."

The hoof-poundings and the squeals and the jangling of metal had grown apace. Bogan whisked the receiver from his ear, clapped a hand over the mouth-piece and swung about in his chair.

"Say, Jimmy," he snapped irritably, "for heaven's sake can't ye keep 'em a little quieter? I can't hear a darned word over the 'phone with this rumpus goin' on. They're tryin' to talk to me from the flat. Things aint goin' none too well up there," he ended by way of explaining his testiness.

Jimmy Breen slapped a gray flank and then stepping in front of the team, pushed apart two tossing gray heads.

"Here, calm down, you!" he said sharply. "Cut that out, Neddy! And you, Sister, be quiet! Still, now! Stand decent and quiet—you hear?"

He said this last in lowered tones, for Bogan, his face all drawn again, was once more listening at the 'phone.

"Gee!" Jimmy heard him say under his breath, and saw the muscles set along that square jaw. "Sure, if I can. Think I better come up? I'll see 'f I can't get off."

He hung the receiver on its hook and got out of his chair. As he stepped down from the little raised platform on which the trick-desk stood, Breen noticed that his face was set and that his under lip was quivering.

"Look out for the desk for a minute, will ye?" Bogan asked Jimmy. "I'm goin' to rout out Cap and see 'f he won't lemme off for a coupla hours or so. I guess things is goin' pretty rotten up to the flat."

"Too bad," said Breen with awkward sympathy. "Sure, I'll keep an eye on the desk. Trot along!"

But Bogan had not taken three steps from the desk when again the brazen note of the tapper banged through the house.

"There's the second," said Jimmy, and Bogan sprang back to the desk, recording its arrival.

In a moment the truck-room was alive with men, who seemed to have sprung up through the floor and to have dropped through the ceiling.

Jimmy Breen leaped to the driver's seat, snapped the belt about him, leaned far forward and yelled to the three horses. And even as he did so, Lieutenant Huber, shooting through a trap-door in the floor above, landed in the tiller seat and grasped the big wheel. Captain

Flanders, a huge man with a drooping gray mustache and bushy gray eyebrows, roared: "Let her go, Jimmy!" and began yanking the bell-rope. Men, wide awake in a trice, swarmed onto the side-steps and reached for helmets and rubber coats.

It was no time to ask off, with a second alarm in from 538. Bogan realized, no matter how badly he might be needed at that little flat on Ferry Street. Indeed, there was not time to let them know there that they needn't look for him for a while. Banging shut the record-book after he had made that last hurried entry, he had just time to leap for the truck and tumble onto the side-step as with clanging bell and three straining, plunging horses, it shot out of the truck-house into the bleak midnight chill of the all but deserted streets.

Far to the opposite curb, that the ladder-ends might clear the truck-house, doors, plunged the three grays, swung sharply to the left at Jimmy's urging of reins and voice, broke into a quick gallop, and with Huber spinning the tiller and straightening out the truck after them, they tore down the quiet side-street, swung into the Avenue and headed downtown.

Far ahead of them, a wide, shimmering patch of light, which was not the reflection of any electric lights, shone on the dull clouds.

"Hup! Hup!" yelled Jimmy Breen, leaning over until the seat belt strained and creaked, and shaking the reins over the three plunging gray backs.

The pound of hoofs on the asphalt pavement quickened. The big truck swerved and swayed and bumped. The uprights of the elevated structure went shooting past faster and faster. On an avenue paralleling this one, the men on the side step could hear the scream of a hard-driven engine's siren, and through the side streets they could see the stream of trailing sparks coming from her fire-box as she swept downtown.

"Take Conant Street!" yelled Flanders to his driver, making a trumpet of his hands. Jimmy pulled hard on the reins with his left hand and Huber span the tiller for dear life. Under the elevated

They tore
down the
quiet side
street.

structure they shot, bumped across two surface-car tracks, straightened out into Conant

Street and went on at a still wilder pace.

Bogan, half torn from the truck as it lurched with its change of direction, clawed wildly at the hand-rail and barely saved himself a nasty spill to the

him—crying his name in her agony. Suppose—suppose she died, calling still for him, and he not there. He gritted his teeth and stifled a groan that rose to his lips. And they'd called another doctor—a specialist. That looked bad. He was aware his teeth were chattering, and not from the bitter chill of the winter night, either.

He was aroused from his bitter musings by Captain Flander's elbow prodding him in the ribs.

"Hang on when we take this corner," he was saying with fine scorn.

A jolt, a bump, a wild skidding almost to the opposite curb and they were around it. The humming roar of pumping engines smote the ear-drums deafeningly. Close at hand, a five-story building belched flame and smoke from most of its windows. Ladders already showed thick against its front, and down them streams of half-clad, yelling men were coming from the upper windows.

pavement. Flanders, noting this, swore under his breath.

"Wot's the matter with ye?" he howled.

"Didn't ye hear me tell Jimmy to take Conant? Wot in 'ell are ye tryin' to get spilled off for, then?"

Bogan muttered something unintelligible. The truth of the matter was that his mind was on anything but the work in hand. Indeed, his mind was back there in the little flat on Ferry Street. They had told him that Eileen was calling for

Flanders took one quick look upward and let out a crinkling oath.

"A flop-house, and goin' like that and men yet in her! God!"

A district chief ran to meet them as they drew up. His helmet was gone and he was bleeding from a cut over one eye. He waved an arm to a fourth-story window—a window swarming with half-naked men, who shrieked horribly and seemed about to jump to the street.



"Your aerial up there—quick, Flanders!" he bawled.

They pulled in beneath that window with the heat blistering their faces and broken glass tinkling down all about them.

"Don't jump!" howled the chief through a megaphone to the men in the window. "Wait—wait! Here's a ladder comin' up to you!"

"The big stick, boys. Make a record with it!" bawled Flanders, even as Jimmy Breen leaped down to unhitch the horses.

There was a whirl of mechanism, a twisting, a trembling. Up went the big aerial, slid in towards the wall, rested its end on the window-sill. Still jabbering and shrieking in horrible fashion, the men in the window fought to crowd through—all of them at once.

"Up with yer, boys! Get 'em out decent! Don't let 'em choke it!" roared Flanders, and sprang for the ladder.

But Larry Bogan was before him, swarming up the rungs with the lithe-ness of a cat.

Even as he ascended he noticed the illuminated sign just above the entrance of the place, the electric bulbs still burning within it:

ELYSIUM HOUSE
ROOMS 20 & 25 CTS. PER NIGHT.
BEDS. 15 CTS. PER NIGHT

That illuminated sign, still shining amidst the smoke and flames, disclosed the character of the place—a cheap lodging house: a "flop-house," in the vernacular, one of the teeming warrens in which down-and-outs and hoboes and ne'er-do-wells found shelter for a night—provided they had the price to pay for it.

Bogan reached the top of the ladder and fought his way inside. The flames were already creeping too close for comfort. With one hand he grabbed a howling, all but naked man, with the other he fought back the rest of them.

"This way—one at a time! Stop yer crowdin'! There's plenty of time!" he shouted, and shoved the man through the open window into the waiting arms of Captain Flanders.

"Here's one that's gotta be took down,

Cap," said he as he placed the inert form of the last occupant in Flanders' arms.

"That all?"

"All here."

"Yer sure of it?"

"Better look round a bit."

The Captain went down the ladder with the burden in his arms.

The floor was divided by sheathing into little cubby holes, each with a door, which passed at the Elysium and similar houses for rooms. The partitions did not reach to the ceiling. Estimating the municipal requirements of so many cubic feet of air per lodger, and doing it on the basis of the total air-space of the entire floor, this open space by the ceiling allowed the installing of many more "rooms" than would have been possible otherwise.

Already the sheathing partitions were beginning to roar and crackle as lurid red tongues swept over them.

Bogan took a few steps into the place and was retreating before the rush of heat when he heard a moaning somewhere to the rear.

He stopped irresolute. The flames were eating towards him. There was still a chance for a quick rush to the back of the building, but once there and cut off by flames, what chance of escape there might be, heaven only knew.

The moaning sounded again, and louder this time. It came from far down a narrow passageway between the miserable little cells. Bogan, reversing his helmet and pulling it down and lowering his head, made a rush for the sound.

He kicked in a door and stumbled into what was evidently a bath-room. Its one window gave on a wide areaway—a light and air shaft, a hollow square, about which the four sides of the place were built.

Smoke poured in close after him. He slammed the door and lifted the window. A rush of hot air almost stifled him. Then he heard the moans again—this time close at hand. He stooped. Beneath the window, where evidently he had fallen in his attempts to open it, lay a huddled figure, the face weak and drawn, the chin and cheeks unshaven for weeks.

Bogan grasped it by the collar of the sorry shirt it wore, and opened the door, intending to drag it to the ladder at the front of the building; but with the opening of the door a second time he saw the whole floor was now a raging mass of flames. The partitions were blazing merrily from one end of the place to the other. Escape in that direction, even as he had feared, was cut off.

Moreover, the door was cracking and snapping. It was only a question of seconds before it went down, letting in on them the writhing mass of flame without.

Bogan jumped to the window and looked out. The shaft was blistering hot, but just above his head was a metal gutter, and above that the sloping sides of the mansard roof which formed the fifth story. In the twinkling of an eye he saw the way of escape—for himself. Standing on tiptoe on the window-sill, he could grip his fingers in that gutter. Farther along, a metal water-pipe ran up the side of the building to the roof. By working his way along the gutter to the water-pipe he could crawl up that to the roof and safety. But this man on the floor—how about him?

He thought of the flat on Ferry Street and of Eileen in her agony there, calling his name, waiting for him. He thought of the other life, that, pray God, was safely ushered into the world by this time. Wasn't it his right, nay, his duty, to make sure of his own safety—particularly in light of what was happening back in that Ferry Street flat to-night? This man on the floor was one of the dregs of the social cup. Ten to one he was better off left here, his misery ended. The pungent odor of cheap whisky in the stifling little bath-room told Bogan why the man had been confused and crawled in here where there was no chance of escape.

He felt a sudden anger at that sodden figure lying there—an anger that the man should have moaned at all and called him into this quandary. Well, the rights and wrongs of the thing were clear enough to anyone. Bogan peeled off his coat, stepped onto the window-sill and reached up for the gutter.

The door snapped and buckled and

went down. A swirl of flame lit up the dingy room. The man on the floor neither moved or made a sound. It would be a painless death for him; that was plain. Bogan began to draw himself up. He was thinking of Eileen and the new little face that would greet him at the flat.

Then all at once he gave a choking cry. He had realized suddenly that he would never, so long as he lived, look at that child of his and Eileen's without seeing, too, this squalid bath-room and the inert figure on the floor.

"God!" he cried, and tumbled back into that room.

The doorway was outlined in flame. The ceiling was warping and bulging. The cheap oil-cloth on the floor was twisting and blistering.

The flickering light showed Bogan a heavy leather belt around the man's waist. He unbuckled it, slipped it higher, beneath the man's shoulders; then, jerking him up roughly, he drew the ends through his own belt and buckled it securely.

It was fearfully hot; his lungs were searing; he could feel his face blistering; his hair sizzled and singed under the rim of his helmet. He crawled to the window, dragging the man after him; he crept out onto the sill, reached down and balanced his dragging burden on it, then stretched up and caught the gutter with his fingers.

There was a sharp tug at his belt, a weight that seemed to be breaking his hold; the limp body swung free of the window and trailed down from his belt.

Would the gutter hold their combined weight, or would they be dropped into the inferno below? Already the window they had just quitted was beginning to belch flames as Bogan slowly, painfully, worked his way with his dragging burden farther from that window.

And even if the gutter held, was there anyone on the roof to hear his shouts and save them before his strength ebbed and they dropped like twin plummets?

He worked his way still farther along the gutter, bellowing hoarsely.

His head was whirling crazily; there was no feeling in his hands or arms now. Twice he thought he had lost his hold

and that they were falling, but each time, looking agonizedly upwards, he saw his fingers gripped in the gutter.

The smoke and the heat had blinded him. No longer could he see whether or not his fingers still kept their hold. The frightful sensations of falling persisted. Time and again he was sure they were going. His whole body was growing numb and a great resignation was stealing over him. What mattered it whether or not they dropped? It would be over in a few seconds at the worst.

He was quite unaware he was keeping up his bellowing roar. It was something beyond his volition, now.

He heard a scraping on the roof above his head. He tried to look up but his eyes were too blurred to see. A roar answered his own.

"Steady there! Steady!" some one was directing.

Another scraping sound—a slipping, a sliding. Some one was near him. He could feel it. A rope was being swiftly and surely adjusted beneath his arms. Then he was drawn upward—his face smashing against the slates of the roof.

Bogan came to his senses lying on the side-step of the truck. He pushed away the ambulance surgeon bending over him. He go to the hospital? Well, he rather guessed *not*. *He* was all right. To prove it he got up and walked about and waved his arms and worked his stiffened legs. The ambulance surgeon grinned. He said something about getting a club if you really wanted to kill some men.

Bogan was for going back and fighting the fire; the only thing that restrained him was the fact that the fire was all out.

In the gray of the biting winter morning, Truck Sixty-three swung homeward. Back through Conant Street plodded the horses, Jimmy Breen holding them down to a sedate trot now. They came to the Avenue and the looming structure of the elevated.

Now Ferry Street is the next street down the Avenue from Conant. Larry

Bogan, clinging to the side-step just behind Captain Flanders, had been doing some heavy thinking. As they turned into the Avenue he touched the Captain's elbow.

"I—I—say, Cap." Larry stammered, "we're so near my flat I'd sorter like to run up there a minute. I won't be gone long. I—"

"So ye *do* feel shaky, eh, boy?" Flanders inquired sympathetically.

"Me?" said Bogan. "Aw, gee, no! I'm all right. It aint that. But you see, Cap, the wife—last night—"

Larry began to stammer. He dropped his voice to a hoarse whisper. Captain Flanders listened intently. As Larry finished, the Captain let out his best roar.

"Get off this truck and get over there," he bellowed. "Darn it all, why didn't ye tell me that last night? Get on, now—you hear? And say, don't ye show up at the house till ye're sure everything's all right with 'em."

Bogan ran down the Avenue limpingly, turned into Ferry Street and entered the door of the four-flat house, the third-floor flat of which he approached with a sudden halting of his steps—a soft, overwhelming fear choking his throat.

He was a sorry figure, with a blackened and peeling face, and red-rimmed eyes that shone ghoulishly out of the caked smut and soot on his features. He was gulping, too, like a frightened child, but he didn't know that.

It was Eileen's mother who heard him coming and opened the door—Eileen's mother, beaming like a holy angel at him over the rims of her glistening spectacles.

"It's a boy, she cried, embracing her drooping son-in-law and planting a kiss where the soot was thickest.

Larry Bogan made a strange sound in his throat. If he hadn't been so big and so smutty and so altogether hideous, his mother-in-law would have been sure he was sobbing.

"A boy?" he said croakingly. "Say, you got another guess comin'. It's a man—a man, I tell ye, and I oughta know."

GUY GARRICK is always up to the minute. Each new phase of criminal science is absorbed and developed by him. In this story he finds a drug, originated and perfected in Mexico and only learned of by our police after refugees began to hasten across the border. Its effect facilitates the designs of a group of Mexicans to extract a fortune from a terrified woman.

The Soldier of Fortune

By Arthur B. Reeve

ILLUSTRATED BY GEORGE BREHM

HELLO, Garrick—you couldn't have dropped in at a more opportune moment. Are you busy this evening?"

"Not especially," replied Garrick to the cordial greeting of John Burke, house detective at the Vanderveer Hotel. "I just came in for a chat with you. Why, what's the matter? Is there a round-up of hotel beats or is it 'con' men?"

"Neither," answered Burke, drawing the young detective quietly into an angle down the corridor from the hotel office. "You've heard of the beautiful Señora Castillo, I suppose?"

"Well, I understand that she was among the wealthy Mexican refugees staying here."

"Yes. We're having no end of trouble these days with them—plots and counterplots. They are masters at intrigue. Why, Garrick, you have no idea of what is going on under the apparently peaceful surface right here in our own city. But there is much more than even I know or can tell you."

"Indeed?" said Garrick, recalling the house man to his starting point. "But what about the Señora?"

"You know," slowly replied Burke, "she is a very beautiful woman."

"Which is no crime," smiled Garrick.

"Quite the contrary," smiled back Burke. "You see, it's this way. Lately I've been noticing her and she seems to have a lot of annoyers—admirers, I suppose they would call themselves. Why, whenever she appears downstairs there always seems to be some one staring at her. Until recently I don't think she paid much attention to any of them. At least, she didn't seem to."

"Rather a ticklish situation to deal with without putting your foot in it," commented Garrick.

"That's it," agreed Burke. "Now yesterday, one of them who looks like a Mexican called and sent his card up with something written on it in Spanish. The boy got away with the card before I knew anything about it, but I don't imagine it would have told us anything, for these people are too cautious for that. However, it had its effect. She saw the man in the parlor—a Señor Morelos, according to the page's recollection of the name on the card. Of course, I don't know what it was all about, but they seemed to be on friendly terms, although, when my attention was called to it, I could imagine that the Señora was nervous—and at least a little bit frightened. She didn't seem to regard him as an admirer."

"Has the fellow been around again?" asked Garrick.

"Yes. Not half an hour ago he sauntered into the café. I happened to catch sight of him and watched him for a few moments as he sat in a booth sipping a drink and poring over a piece of paper. He seemed to be in some perplexity, for finally he seemed to make up his mind about something. He tore up the paper into little pieces, threw part of them into the cuspidor and scattered the rest as he walked out into the corridor."

"Did you get the bits of paper?" asked Garrick quizzically.

"Yes, and I have pasted them together as well as I can. They seem to be a telegraphic message in a cipher. But I can't make anything out of it."

Burke spread out a sheet of paper on which he had carefully fitted together the yellow pieces of the telegram as if he had been playing with a jig-saw puzzle. Garrick scanned the re-constructed message keenly. From the date it had evidently been delayed in transmission. It was dated at El Paso, Texas, and read:

YEAOME & IESU ANL NRSEM
ESDY NUCET SEYU EPNR
SEUCND WUEVIC VOLLIT SNR

It was unsigned, and there was no clue to the sender, although it bore the address of Morelos, the Mexican-American Tea Room, New York.

Garrick had quickly written the message out again, reversed, and was reading it slowly.

RNS TILLOV CIVEUW DNCUES
RNPE UYES TECUN YDSE
MESRN LNA USEI & EMOA EY

"There are ten E's," he ruminated, tapping them off quickly with a pencil. "At first sight it looks as if E must really stand for E. It is always the letter most commonly used and here it is the most frequent."

Burke was waiting impatiently. "It will take time to puzzle the thing out," he broke in at length.

"Has the Señora made any complaint?" asked Garrick.

"N-no. To tell the truth I don't be-

lieve she would dare to complain, anyhow. You don't know how secretive some of these people are. They distrust us, even as allies. It's all very strange, and perhaps I'm wrong, but I fancy that during the past day or so, there has been a change in her."

He paused.

"Where is Señor Castillo?" asked Garrick.

"Just the point," put in Burke. "I believe that he remained in Mexico and sent his wife up here for safety. There have been rumors in the papers that he has been captured by the bandits of his state. Naturally, you will say, that was enough to have caused a change in the Señora. But there is something else going on here. I wish to heaven I knew what it was."

"They are wealthy, I suppose?"

"Yes. I understand that Jose Castillo is one of the greatest *hacendados* in the country."

"Perhaps it may be blackmail — or she may be the victim of a get-rich-quick gang."

Burke shook his head. "I can't say," he replied dubiously. "But at any rate we've got to protect the reputation of the Vanderveer and the safety of its guests. I wanted your opinion, so I have taken the time to explain things to you. Now, if you'll come around with me to the Red Room and look in, I'll show you the man."

Burke led the way down the hall in much the manner of a hound eager for the right scent. From the shadow of a curtained door he pointed out to Garrick a couple seated at a table discussing something earnestly in a low tone.

Señora Castillo was really a very beautiful woman, would have been so without the added attraction of the latest Parisian creation which accentuated rather than concealed her exquisite form. From her hair-dress, which breathed of the Rue de la Paix, to the heels of her dainty slippers, she was a charming creature, artificial, it was true, as were many of her countrywomen of the same class, but with an attractiveness because of the very artificiality.

The man was a dark faced, olive-skinned fellow, military in bearing,



Señora Castillo was really a very beautiful woman, would have been so without the latest Parisian creation which accentuated rather than concealed her exquisite form.

straight as an arrow, with a little black imperial and a distinguished shock of bushy dark hair. They were a striking couple.

"It's evident," whispered Garrick, "that he is an ardent admirer, whatever she may think of him."

"That's what I'm afraid of," returned Burke. "Sometimes I fancy she's afraid of him—and then again I think she is secretly flattered by him. She may be leading him a merry chase, playing a difficult game, for all I know, and my interference may mess things up in a serious manner. I give it up, Garrick."

Burke motioned to a waiter who was passing with a tray. A moment later he rejoined Garrick.

"I'm going to give you an example of the secret service I've built up here at the Vanderveer," he whispered with just a trace of pride. "This is the first time I've had a chance to try this on our friend Morelos. Always before he was either alone, or they sat where I couldn't get at them. You see, I want to find out what they are talking about. So I have given Charley his instructions. Now, watch."

Charley, the waiter, hovered about the table of the couple, putting seltzer in the glasses, straightening things on the next table, quick with a match or a spoon when it was needed, doing everything a most obsequious waiter could do to earn a tip—and overhear snatches of conversation.

"That's part of the system I have built up here for the protection of the hotel," commented Burke from their place of concealment. "I can use any employee of the hotel when I want to use him."

From time to time the waiter would glance toward the curtained door, as if waiting for a signal.

Perhaps ten minutes later, Burke crooked a finger and a moment later the waiter joined them, on some pretext, coming by a round-about way.

"Is there anything to report?" asked Burke eagerly.

"They seem to be talking about a ransom. I heard the man say something about two hundred and fifty thousand dollars."

Burke gave a low whistle. "A ransom for Castillo!" he cried. "That's it, Garrick. They are negotiating. Did you hear the woman say anything, Charley?"

"No, I couldn't seem to catch what she said. But she seems to be pleading with him."

"The brute," ejaculated Burke.

"I say, Charley," cut in Garrick, as the waiter passed again with a tray of fresh glasses. "Rub off those glasses carefully. Here, let me do it. Don't touch them. Or better yet—get the captain of the waiters. He can handle them carefully with gloved hands. And that will not excite suspicion, either. When they are through with the glasses, have them brought back here to me. Only tell him to handle them carefully—with gloves and only with the thumb and forefinger."

Several minutes later the empty glasses were in the possession of Garrick.

"Is there anywhere I can take these and not be disturbed?" asked the young detective.

"I have a room of my own—a sort of rogues' gallery—on the roof," smiled Burke. "No one will disturb us there."

"Good. Leave some one here to watch them and tip off Charley to keep his ears open still."

Up in Burke's room on the top floor, Garrick took the glasses and deftly shook over them some ordinary talcum powder which one of the bell-hops brought him. Lightly he blew the powder off with a few gentle puffs of his breath.

There on the smooth crystal surface, clear and distinct, came out a series of finger prints.

"Not as good as I could wish," he remarked thoughtfully, regarding the smudges on the glass. "But we'll have to do our best."

Hastily he ran over them, endeavoring to arrange them in their correct sequence. He was doing an elaborate calculation with figures on a piece of paper.

"Police headquarters—bureau of identification?" asked Garrick over the telephone, a few minutes later when he had finished his calculation. "Hello, Captain—this is Garrick. First rate—how

are you? Have a pencil handy? Well, take this. Twenty-seven over twenty-nine. Yes. Here's the rest of it. I can't be sure. They are very poor prints. But if you'll look up what you have in the files, I'll be eternally in your debt. Call me at the Vanderveer—ask for the house man, Burke."

"Good idea, Garrick," complimented Burke as the receiver dropped back on its hook.

"Good if it works out," replied Garrick. "The bureau of identification is pretty clever, sometimes, on a very slender clue. I hope I've made the calculation correctly. It's pretty complicated, but if you give all the loops, whorls, arches and composites their proper arbitrary numerical value, it's certain, even though it does seem like a lot of gibberish when expressed in numbers."

Garrick had spread out the cipher message again.

"As long as your man downstairs is watching them, we may as well try to figure this out," he remarked.

For a long time he studied over the thing, trying all sorts of combinations and using every method he could think of in order to unravel the mystery it contained.

"Of course," he said, half to himself, "almost any cipher is readable, if you go at the thing scientifically. But I want to get at it quickly."

He was studying the message, as he had reversed it. Suddenly his face lighted up.

"I think I have it," he cried, "without all the elaborate calculation I had feared. Take those last letters, EMO-AEY. It suggests to me MONEY—that is what they are after. The E probably was added from the previous word. If it is EMONEY that gives us A equals N. E equals E, of course, and the other letters are the same in both the cipher and the original, M equals M, O equals O, and Y equals Y."

"Humph!" exclaimed Burke, "that's too simple."

"It's not so simple, at that," urged Garrick. "But a little scientific common sense goes a long way in this business, Burke. The two things that interested them were money and Castillo. Well,

take that first word RNS TILLOV. The letters STILLO suggest something. If R equals C and N equals A, then the other letters remain the same, S equals S, T equals T, I equals I, and L equals L. This is luck. Let me see how it works out."

Garrick was thoughtfully tapping on the table with the pencil, mentally trying to fit in what he had discovered with what had so far been hidden.

An idea seemed to flash over him all at once. He wrote the message out in the dots and dashes of the Morse alphabet without any abbreviations. To Burke it meant nothing. But Garrick ran his eye over it again, then paused a moment and began tapping with the pencil.

"By George, that's it, Burke," he cried excitedly. "Listen. I am tapping it out."

Clearly clicked out the letters of the original message:

YEAOME & IESU ANL NRSEM
ESDY NUCET SEYU EPNR
SEUCND WUEVIC VOLLIT SNR

"Now," he cried, "I reverse it."

Instead of the meaningless collection of letters, when it was reversed, the dots and dashes actually made words, some letters, which were formed by symmetrical combinations of dots and dashes, being the same, others formed by reversed combinations, being transposed.

The message read:

Castillo bribed guard, escaped yesterday. Use mescal and seize money.

"Use mescal and seize money," repeated Burke, looking blankly at Garrick. "'Mescal'—that's that Mexican brandy."

Garrick was palpably excited by his discovery. "No—not the brandy. I don't believe that is what is meant. No, there is another thing of the same name, not a drink at all. It is called the mescal button, the peyote bean, and has powerful qualities as a stimulant. Castillo's estate was in the northern part of Mexico. That is where the mescal bean grows. Castillo has escaped."

"But the money," interrupted Burke. "What money?"

The telephone rang. Garrick answered it quickly.

"Police headquarters," he explained as he replaced the receiver. "They have something on 27 over 29—which means really the twenty-seventh division of the twenty-ninth row, as they classify finger prints, theoretically in thirty-two rows of thirty-two pigeon-holes each. There was just enough in those prints I took so that they didn't have to hunt through many files. But in one file they tell me they found prints which correspond to the combination I gave them. They are of a man named Santos, arrested first in 1911 for a minor offense and released, but now under indictment by the Federal grand jury for counterfeiting Mexican paper money in this country. Your friend Morelos is really Santos, without doubt."

Garrick and Burke were whisked down to the main floor to find out how matters progressed there.

Almost at the elevator door they were met by the waiter, Charley, in his excitement violating all the rules of the hotel.

"They have just gone out," he exclaimed.

"Together?" asked Burke.

"Yes, sir, and your man is shadowing them. He spoke to me as he followed them out, sir, and told me to tell you he'd hang on until he could get a chance to call you up."

"I suppose there is nothing to do until we hear from him," remarked Burke, impatiently. "He's a good man—perhaps he can shadow them better than even I could, for I'm never sure but that some of these people know me. They wouldn't be likely to know him, for even most of the servants here don't know who is working for me."

In spite of the fact that it would in all probability be only a matter of minutes before they heard from Burke's shadow, Garrick could scarcely restrain his impatience. Charley had faithfully hovered about the pair, but had overheard nothing except a couple of references to some apparently mutual friends, among them a Señora Mendez.

At last the telephone switchboard

operator motioned to Burke, who was standing near the cigar counter, trying to look unperturbed. A moment later he emerged perspiring from the booth and rejoined Garrick.

"Where are they?" demanded Garrick.

"My man has shadowed them to the Mexican-American Tea Room."

"The place to which Morelos, or Santos, whoever he is, had his message delivered," exclaimed Garrick. "Where is it?"

"Scarcely around the corner. He shadowed them there, but did not go in because he wanted to be able to telephone us. He is watching across the street from a drug store."

"Do you know anything of the place, Burke?"

"Only that it is frequented largely by Mexicans in the city who want to discuss affairs in their native land to the accompaniment of dishes hot with assorted peppers."

"Burke," exclaimed Garrick under his breath, "I'll wager she is going to arrange to pay that ransom. We must follow her."

"They are a desperate people," remarked Burke slowly. "They will stop at nothing if they think you are interfering in their game."

"I'm ready for that," replied Garrick, who had been running the situation over hastily in his head. "Get me my office," he added to the telephone girl. "I think we can trust your man to watch them just a bit longer, since he has been so successful so far."

Garrick had scarcely finished describing a peculiar apparatus which he wanted one of his men to send up to the Vanderveer immediately and rejoined Burke at the cigar counter, when Burke laid his hand cautiously on his arm.

"Don't look around yet," whispered the house detective, "but after a minute, step over and light a cigarette. Then notice that Mexican standing at the desk, near the house 'phone."

Garrick did so. The Mexican was a swarthy man of medium height, good looking, and would have been inconspicuous, if it had not been that he had



Just for a moment Garrick caught a glimpse of the party inside.

a peculiar sidelong glance from his dark eyes, as if he would watch without being watched or seeming to watch.

"I didn't hear whom he asked for," continued Burke, as Garrick rejoined him puffing vigorously, "but the clerk repeated the number of the room in such a way that I could hear it. It was the Señora's number."

"The plot is thickening," remarked Garrick, careful not to look at the newcomer, for the first rule in watching anyone is never to let the watched catch the eye of the watcher.

"Your young man is here," whispered the telephone girl to Garrick a few minutes later.

"Very well. Send him up to Mr. Burke's room. Burke, I want you to come up there again with me. Meanwhile, have some one else tail that man at—there he goes now. You'll have to do it yourself. Call me up here, as soon as you get an opportunity. If I'm not here I'll leave word what to do."

Quickly Garrick rode up again to Burke's little office on the top floor, where his boy had left a box which was quite small, including a dry battery. In the office he set it up on an ordinary tripod, much as if it had been the camera of a traveling photographer. Inside, however, was a small tantalum incandescent lamp, of peculiar shape and ar-

ranged so that it glowed from the current of the battery. Quickly adjusting the thing, he attached to it a sort of headpiece, then with a last look to be sure that everything was all right, he picked up a similar smaller instrument, and placed it under his coat, stuffing out the pocket on the opposite side to make it look as symmetrical as he could.

At the desk he hastily scrawled a note telling Burke that he was going around to the Tea Room and would call up before taking any further steps. He had scarcely turned the corner below the Vanderveer when he ran almost plumb into Burke himself.

"What's the matter?" asked Garrick, looking about at the deserted street and seeing no mysterious stranger. "Did you lose him?"

"No. He went around to that confounded tea room and went in. I thought there was no use in my staying there, too, and as it was only a step around here, I thought I'd come back to tell you. What shall we do?"

Burke had fallen into Garrick's stride as he lounged along, much like a sightseer to whom the night life of even a side street was interesting.

"What did the fellow who was watching the place say? Has she gone yet?"

"The Señora? No. But he seems much excited. There seems to be some kind of entertainment going on there, he says. I followed our mysterious friend around there and watched him go in."

"I think I'll just about sit in and belong—make it a regular party," laughed back Garrick.

"I'd go with you," answered Burke promptly, "only I'm afraid some of them know me. I'd be a hindrance rather than a help."

"No, I don't want you to go with me," answered Garrick quickly. "Two of us would excite twice as much suspicion as one lone sightseer looking for excitement."

Garrick paused on the corner. Down the street, Burke's shadow could be seen hanging nonchalantly about in a dim, unlighted part of the block.

"That won't do, either," remarked Garrick. "Some one is going to spot that man. I'm going into that tea room, and

as soon as I do, I want you to withdraw him and go back to your office. You'll find that I have arranged a little surprise up there for you. In the middle of the floor there is something that looks very much like a camera on a tripod, except that instead of a black cloth to throw over your head there is a headpiece that fits over your ears. There are other exceptions, too—but if you'll just get back there and get that headgear on, and keep it on—well, I think you will learn something to your advantage soon. I may depend on you, Burke?"

"Absolutely, Garrick," replied Burke, as the two parted.

A minute later Garrick sauntered into the little Mexican tea room and curiosity shop. It was an old, three-story, brownstone house which had been altered with the uptown shift of trade, and now in the basement had the appearance of a cheap restaurant.

In spite of the fact that both Burke and his shadow had seen several people enter, the basement with its lines of white-lined tables was deserted.

Garrick paused. Now and then sounds indicated that upstairs, at least, there were guests, perhaps in private dining-rooms away from the interruptions of the common herd of customers who might drop in. A single waitress in the rear was reading a newspaper, the motion of her lips as she followed the words showing that she was none too familiar with that diversion.

As Garrick entered she rose and advanced toward him. She was small and copper colored, evidently of the Mexican Indian type.

"I would like to see the—er—proprietor," he asked, repeating the question in as good Spanish as he could improvise.

"Señora Mendez?" queried the girl. "Yes," he answered. "Is the Señora in?"

"I will see."

Her manner was half sullen, but Garrick was determined not to be frustrated until he had exhausted every means of finding out what was afoot, now that he had got so far.

Señora Mendez, who returned with the girl, from the mysterious region

above stairs, was of quite a different type from that which Garrick had imagined. For one thing, he could not help noticing her languishing black eyes, which might in her younger days well have belonged to a Spanish dancing girl. Yet at the same time there was something shrewd and sharp about them, as if the owner had an eye to the main chance whether it were a business deal or a romance.

Garrick bowed low.

"I am going to give a dinner to some friends of mine, mostly Englishmen, who are interested in Mexico," he explained glibly. "I've heard a great deal of your cooking here, Señora, of your *chiles* and *tortillas* and *frijoles*. It isn't an ordinary dinner, I want, either. I expect to interest some of the people in a mine down there which I control. I am sure that you can give a Mexican tinge to the dinner—and I'll engage that it won't be any cheap affair."

The Señora had been watching him narrowly. Somehow or other he felt that he had made an impression.

"I should want a private dining-room that would seat about a dozen—comfortably," he added.

"I think we can accommodate you," replied the Señora, evidently struck by Garrick's positive assurance that it was "no cheap affair."

"Might I see the room?" he ventured.

She hesitated and eyed him sharply.

"You see I thought of this in preference to one of the big hotels because I want the dinner to be both good and appropriate to the occasion," he flattered.

"My largest private room is occupied by a party to-night," she replied.

"Aren't there any others?"

"Yes, only I am afraid they are too small."

"Still, I might get some idea of how the large one is fitted up, might I not?" persisted Garrick.

She was apparently considering. Here evidently was an American who wanted to rope his friends into some scheme and no doubt was more than ready to pay handsomely for any glamour that might be thrown around it to make it seem truly Mexican.

"I will show you one that is not as

handsomely decorated as the big one." she agreed at length. "You understand we not only have this tea room and restaurant, but we also sell Mexican curios. All the decorations here are for sale."

"And very interesting they are, too," complimented Garrick, this time with genuine interest in the beautiful examples of Mexican weaving, of pottery, of art work, to say nothing of some treasures that would have delighted an archaeologist.

Señora Mendez led the way upstairs, disclosing, in fact, several rooms. As they passed the door of one, a servant opened it, bearing a tray of little cups with a pungent, steaming liquid. Just for a moment Garrick caught a glimpse of the party inside. There were several ladies and gentlemen, all smoking the inevitable little cigarettes. One face, however, caught and held his attention. It was that of Señora Castillo. Beside her sat her dark-haired visitor at the Vanderveer. There was only time for a glance, but Garrick recognized none of the others—certainly there was no one who looked like the latest visitor at the hotel, he of the furtive glance.

Señora Mendez closed the door herself, with a little exclamation of vexation, then ushered Garrick into a smaller room down the hall.

On a piano in the larger room someone was playing a peculiar rhythmic composition with a curious thread of monotonous melody running through it, like the timeful beat of a drum.

"That is a strange piece of music," remarked Garrick, gazing about the room with an interest he did not have to feign.

"Yes, it is a song of the Pueblo Indians of New Mexico which has been set to music for the piano by one of the guests of the party. You catch the monotonous beat of the tom-toms in it?"

Garrick nodded. "Oh indeed," he remarked. "I think I have heard of it before. I believe that the Indians play it when under the influence of mescal."

Señora Mendez's dark eyes were more languishing than ever. Indeed the pupils looked as if they were expanded by a dose of belladonna. As Garrick caught her glance he realized that she was at

least partly under the influence of mescal.

He was not slow to take advantage of the knowledge. He knew that there was a sense of elation, of superiority that came to mescal users, and he determined on a bold stroke, to flatter her.

As she displayed the room, not without a touch of pride, he complimented her, adding quickly: "But, Señora, it is not only the room that is attractive. You Mexicans have a phrase, '*muy simpática*,' which, as I understand it, literally means 'very sympathetic,' but really cannot be done justice to in English. I think it means that charming characteristic of personal attractiveness, the result of a sweet disposition. Anyhow, it may truly be said to fit the mistress of this house. You are '*muy simpática*.'"

Señora Mendez smiled graciously. "I am glad you like the place," she replied, "and I am sure that we shall be able to fix up the large dining room so that it will more than delight your guests."

The rhythmic beat of the music down the hall continued. Garrick seemed to catch the spirit of it.

"I should like to try mescal—once," he ventured. "What is it?"

"A shrub—a religion," she answered dreamily.

"Religion?" he repeated.

"Yes. The mescal cult has spread widely in the states along the Mexican border, and even now and then into more northern states. Your government has forbidden the importation of the plant."

"Is it anything like the drinks called pulque and mescal?" he ventured again.

"No indeed. They are common things. Mescal itself is really the tip of a little cactus plant which rises only half an inch or so from the ground. It grows in the rocky soil in many places in the state of Jalisco. The Indians when they go out to gather it simply lop off the little ends as they peep above the earth, dry them, keep what they wish for their own use, and sell the rest for what is

to them a fabulous sum. Some people chew the buttons; others make them into a sort of tea or infusion, though that is not common."

"I should like to try it," repeated Garrick.

The Señora pushed an electric bell and a servant appeared. A few moments later she returned with a tray of the little mescal buttons, curious round disc-like things about an inch in diameter and perhaps a quarter of an inch thick.

Señora Mendez took a button, pared off the fuzzy tuft of hairs on the top, rolled it into a pellet.

placed it in her mouth and began to chew it slowly, with closed eyes.

Garrick did the same, carefully. The pungent taste told him that it was the same as the odor he had observed from the steaming cups that the servant had been carrying during his momentary glimpse into the larger room.

He felt a sense of physical energy and intellectual power, which soon, however, wore off. Then followed a display of images and colors, a confused riot like a kaleidoscope. The lights in the room became as steady and bright



They were getting the beautiful Señora Castillo more and more under the influence of the drug.

as the sun, only surrounded by the prismatic colors, blazing with glory as if they shone on sands of diamond dust. The ornaments, strange Mexican gods and objects of art, seemed to take on a glory that was almost supernatural until it was no longer any wonder to Garrick that in the untutored minds of the half savages the mescal button should have produced something like a religion. At the same time the strains of the curious Indian song floated in through the open door, down the hallway, apparently controlling the visions. The senses of hearing and sight were intoxicated.

The servant returned, clothed this time in a sort of halo of light and color, every fold of her dress radiating the most delicate tones. She whispered a word to the Señora, who quickly rose and excused herself. As she left, she seemed rather to float over the carpet than to walk.

Garrick had been waiting for just such an opportunity. Here he was, alone in the room. He had been careful not to take too much of the drug, and, for a moment as he heard the footsteps retreating, he threw open the window and breathed in the pure fresh outside air in gulps to clear his head.

Outside his door all was now quiet, except the sounds down the hall. What were they doing? He tiptoed silently along, fearful lest a loose board might betray him.

As he went he looked about into each of the little rooms. All seemed to be empty. Nowhere was there anyone who answered the description of the mysterious stranger.

He paused for a moment at the door. Inside, the group were discussing in low tones the fortunes of the war that was raging in their home land. From the tone of her voice, which he recognized now and then, it was evident that Señora Castillo was far from being reassured that all would be well with her husband. She was evidently suffering a distress that even the reassurances of the entire party could not allay.

Further down the hall Garrick heard other voices, of a man and a woman. There was something familiar about them, and he crept along further.

Although he was not quite familiar enough to recognize the muffled voices, he could at least catch a word now and then.

"Where is the money?" he heard one of them ask.

"In a safety deposit vault downtown."

"Then we must get the key—and a power of attorney from her to open it."

"I have tried."

"Then keep on—you must."

There was a movement in the room as though the two were coming out again. Quickly Garrick retreated.

As he passed the door of the large dining-room he heard a voice say, "But even if I had the money here—in gold—what guarantee would I have that Jose would be released?"

He paused. It was evident what they were doing. They were getting the beautiful Señora Castillo more and more under the influence of the drug, weakening her reasoning powers, playing on her feelings—anything, to get the key to the safety deposit vault, or even to get her to agree to open it herself and hand out to them the coveted gold.

Should he warn her?

Only a moment's thought was needed to reject that thought. A warning might prove more dangerous now than an open alarm.

Quickly he retraced his steps to the little room from which he had come, determined to act in a slower but perhaps more effective way.

Voices down the hall caused Garrick to turn suddenly. He had delayed too long. It was impossible now to get back into the room without being seen.

"You—you are a spy!" cried Señora Mendez, catching sight of him.

Retreat was cut off.

Garrick could almost feel the fiery animosity which now snapped from the eyes of the Señora, who but a few moments ago had been talking with him so graciously.

A gruff voice whispered something and suddenly the lights in the hall were extinguished. He caught the word "*incomunicado*."

There was a rush, a sharp fight in the narrow passageway. Garrick could not

see his assailants, nor had he any idea who they were save by the sounds which told him that he was hopelessly outnumbered.

He felt himself unceremoniously shoved along. They had come to a flight of stairs. As if by force of two or three men, he was slowly forced up, fighting every step.

At last a door seemed to open and with an irresistible impulse he was catapulted through.

Garrick was cornered. Here he was locked in a room apparently without window, a closet on the walls of which he might beat without effect, where even his voice was muffled and swallowed up. He heard them pile something against the door, which otherwise he might have battered down in time. He was unable to get out and give the alarm, unable to use the knowledge which he had so daringly risked his life to acquire.

What might not happen to the beautiful Señora at any moment now that they knew they had been watched, followed even to the very door of the little private dining-room?

He was bleeding profusely from a cut over his eye, but in the Cimmerian darkness that made no difference. Sight was useless here. His coat was torn, but he breathed a sigh of relief as he unslung the apparatus which he carried under his coat and found that it was practically unharmed. Quickly he worked, doing in seconds what otherwise might have taken minutes.

The tripod on which he would have set up his camera-like affair was broken, but he managed to patch it together.

"I'm locked in a sort of closet on the third floor of the Tea Room," he fairly shouted. "They are planning to get the Señora thoroughly under the influence of mescal and then—"

A groan sounded in the darkness beside him.

"My wife!"

Garrick drew back, startled.

What was the voice in the darkness? He blinked into the shadows but could see nothing. Suddenly a hand seemed to clutch his arm, sending shivers over him at its cold, clammy unexpectedness. A

man, much more badly wounded than he, staggered at him from the floor, to which he had sunk in a half conscious stupor.

"Tell me—are they—is my wife—"

He stammered and would have fallen if Garrick had not caught him. In a moment he seemed intuitively to piece together the fragments of the scattered events of the evening, as Burke had pieced together the cipher.

"Castillo—you are Castillo," cried Garrick. "You came to the hotel tonight. In some way you found out that the Señora was here. You followed."

"Yes. I managed to bribe a guard of the bandits after I was captured and to reach the border in a load of fruit. I swam the river. Everywhere I went I seemed to be surrounded by enemies. I made up my mind to travel here as fast as I could without being recognized. Then I went to the hotel to find my wife. They told me she had gone. I did not give my name, but from the description I recognized that it was with Santos—curse his soul—a vagabond in the old days, whom I would have not soiled by hands with. I knew that he often came here. I had heard the bandits say so. But no sooner had I entered and demanded to see the Señora than they seized me and threw me in this room. And you—who are you?"

"A detective—working in the interest of your wife, though she does not know it," replied Garrick tersely, still fumbling with the apparatus he had set up.

Castillo, weakened though he was, beat upon the door in a frenzy. There was not even an echo from the barricade outside, not even a mocking laugh. It was maddening. He groaned and sank on the floor exhausted. What difference did it make if they were discovered and released sooner or later, if all the police in the great city were alarmed hours hence? Now was the time for action, now when even at that very moment the Señora was being drugged. Once in possession of the key, once having worked on her feelings to the breaking point, the wealth that the Castillos had saved from the wreck of their fortunes would amply repay the

gang for all that they might lose here by flight.

Castillo turned to Garrick in despair.

"Hurry," cried Garrick. "Get them before they can get away. Then release us. You will need a doctor, too, for the Señora. They have plied her with the stuff to a dangerous point. Only hurry—hurry!"

"What are you doing?" moaned Castillo. "Are you crazy? Are you talking to yourself or," he added in a tense whisper, "to God?"

"Listen—Castillo," cried Garrick, almost beside himself with excitement. "You see this thing I have here. It is a new form of wireless telephone. The other end of it I have set up on the top of the Vanderveer, where there is the least interference."

It was indeed a miracle that Garrick seemed to be asking. Through the seemingly impenetrable walls of brick and stone he had actually been talking to Burke.

Would it work? Garrick had reduced the sending apparatus which he carried with him to a minimum so that it could be more easily concealed. Beyond the fact that it had worked before he knew nothing.

The minutes seemed to lengthen into hours, as he waited.

Suddenly there was the sound of the vicious knocking down of whatever it was that had been used to barricade the door. Was it help—or was it their infuriated captors, ready now to wreak

the cruel vengeance for which their race was so often noted?

The door crashed in and Garrick felt himself seized.

"Thank God! Man, but you took an awful chance," panted Burke, literally carrying him downstairs in his joy at finding him in no worse plight than he was.

Castillo staggered up and past them, stumbling, groping, falling down the steps.

He sank half-fainting at the feet of the Señora, to whom the Vanderveer house physician was applying such restoratives as the unusual character of the case suggested.

In the background a burly policeman was holding the discomfited Santos.

"It's no crime to give a private dinner party and have a little mescal," he was protesting. "Perhaps you do not realize that I am Morelos—the representative in the United States of the provisional government of—"

"Morelos?" cut in Garrick contemptuously. "You may call yourself Morelos, the soldier of fortune, but the infallible finger print calls you Santos—swindler and counterfeiter."

Castillo had turned at the sound of voices. The look of enmity on his face as he caught sight of Santos was terrible.

"You may be thankful, Santos," ground out Garrick, "that I am going to put two prison walls between you and that man—one for each offense."

"Playing for High Stakes,"

Mr. Reeve's next story of an exploit of Guy Garrick, will be in the August Red Book.

The Previous Chapters of "The Man and the Moment"

ARRANSTOUN CASTLE is one of the Highland show places that delight tourists. Michael Arranstoun, the last of his race, has made love to Violet Hatfield, a shallow English society woman, whose husband is dying, and Arranstoun fears he will have to marry her. To get out of it he is about ready to go through a marriage ceremony with old Bessie, his gate-keeper, when Sabine Delberg, an American girl, tumbles into his sitting room and his life. Sabine is seventeen, violet-eyed and heiress to a fortune which she cannot have until she is married or is twenty-one. She is pursued by an impossible American who wants to marry her for her money. She is sight-seeing at the castle, when to escape the love-making of this American, she runs into a passage and falls through a picture niche into Arranstoun's presence. They tell each other their troubles. One wants a wife who will leave immediately, and the other wants a husband who will do likewise. So they decide to marry at once. But after the ceremony, Arranstoun, overcome by his child wife's charm, clasps her in a masterful embrace and vows she shall not go from him. After a few hours, Sabine escapes.

The next scene of the story is laid at Carlsbad five years later. Sabine, who is known as Mrs. Howard, has developed into a lovely, mysterious woman with an aloofness of manner that is tantalizing to her many suitors. She is with early friends, the Princess Torniloni and her father, who only know that some mystery shrouds the girl's eighteenth year, when she kept away from her friends. They believe that her husband turned out badly and that final separation from him will be possible whenever she wishes. He is supposed to be an American. Mrs. Howard never talks of her affairs, and, when not with her friends, spends her time at a lonely castle, Héronac, perched on a rock over the pounding surf of the rough Brittany coast. There she studies and broods with only an old woman com-

panion and the curé of the near-by village for company.

While at Carlsbad, Henry Fordyce, closest friend of Michael Arranstoun, meets Sabine. He has considered women only a recreation, but now finds that this silent, wonderful one is the strongest factor in his life. He asks her to marry him. She hesitates. Then she sees in a newspaper that Arranstoun, who has been in the Orient ever since finding he could not keep his wife, is at Ostend playing polo. There he is entertaining a Miss Van der Horn, whom Sabine knows. She becomes jealous and decides to free herself from Michael, but does not tell Fordyce who her husband is.

Sabine goes to her Brittany home. Fordyce writes that he is coming to visit her and is bringing a friend, without naming him. The "friend" is Michael Arranstoun.

Sabine pretends she does not recognize Michael. Michael finds "Mrs. Howard" the most irresistibly attractive woman he has ever seen, but he follows her lead, deciding that he will make no move until there is some definite sign whether Sabine really loves Lord Fordyce. He sees the two in a loving attitude, and departs at once for Paris. He writes to Sabine, saying he understands and will begin the divorce proceedings at once. Paris does not interest him, despite the presence of Daisy Van der Horn, so he goes on to Arranstoun, and spends his time reproaching himself for the loss of Sabine. A month goes by, and Sabine goes to London to meet Lord Fordyce's family.

Michael, in an effort to give Fordyce fair play, refuses invitations to London functions where Sabine is present. But he cannot bring himself to begin divorce proceedings till he finds surely that Sabine loves Fordyce, and his growing desire to see her becomes an obsession. Finally he accepts an invitation to a house party at which Sabine is a guest. In a dinner table talk with her he grows so impassioned that Fordyce, who watches, notes how suited Sabine and Michael are to each other and begins to fear for his own happiness.

THE NEW
NOVEL OF
THE GREAT
ENGLISH
AUTHORESS



The Man and the Moment

By Elinor Glyn

ILLUSTRATED BY R. F. JAMES

CHAPTER XVII



THE ball was going splendidly. Everyone seemed to be in fine form. Sabine had danced with an excitement in her veins which she could not control. Had there been no music or lights, she probably would have felt frightfully disturbed and unhappy, but as it was she was only conscious of excitement. Lord Fordyce was above showing jealousy, and was content that she seemed to be enjoying herself, and did not appear unwilling to return to him quite frequently and walk about the room or sit down.

"You are looking so supremely bewitching, my darling," he told her. "I

feel it is selfish of me to keep you away from the gay dances—you are so young and sweet. I want you to enjoy yourself. Have not you danced with Michael Arranstoun yet? I saw you were getting on with him splendidly at dinner; he used to be a great dancer before he went off to foreign parts."

"No, I have not even spoken to him," she answered, with what indifference she could.

"What was he saying just before you left the dining-room which made you look so haughty, dearest? He was not impertinent to you, I hope." And Henry frowned a little at the thought.

Sabine played with her fan; she was feeling inexpressibly mean.

"No—not in the least—we were discussing some one we had both known—long ago. She is dead now. I may have been a little annoyed at what he said. Oh! is that a Scotch reel they are going to begin?"

How glad she was of this diversion! She knew she had been capricious with Lord Fordyce once or twice during the

evening. She was greatly perturbed. Oh! why had she not had the courage to be her usual, honest self, and to have told him immediately at Héronac who her husband really was. She was in a false position, ashamed of her deceit and surrounded by a net-work of acted lies; and all through everything there was the wild longing to speak to Michael again, and to be near him once more as at dinner. She had been conscious of everything that he did, of those with whom he had danced—Moravia several times; and now she knew that he was not in the ball-room.

Nothing could exceed Henry's gentleness and goodness to her. He watched her moods and put up with her caprices; that something unusual had disturbed her he felt, but what it could be he was unable to guess.

Sabine was aware that other women were envying her for the attention showered upon her by this much-sought-after man. She tried to assure herself how fortunate she was, and now she got Henry to tell her once more of things about his home. It was in the fairest part of Kent, and they had often talked of the wonderful garden they would have in that fertile country sheltered from all wind, and she knew that, as soon as the divorce was over, she and Moravia would go and stay there and look over it all, and meet his mother, which meeting had not yet been arranged. For some unknown reason nothing would induce her to go now.

"I would rather see it for the first time, Henry, when—I am engaged to you. Now I should be an ordinary visitor—can't you understand?"

And he had said that he could. It always thrilled him when she appeared to take an interest in his home.

They talked about it—how he would so love her to choose her own rooms and have them arranged as she liked. Then he made pictures of their life together there, and as he spoke her heart seemed to sink and become heavier every moment, until at last she could bear no more.

It was about two dances before supper. She had promised to go in with him. She would get away to her room

now and be alone until then. She must pull herself together.

She told him that she had to settle her hair, which had become disarranged. He left her at the foot of the smaller staircase, which led in a roundabout way to her rooms, saying he would wait for her. She had not wanted to pass through the great hall, where quantities of people were sitting. She was just crossing the corridor where the bachelors were lodged, when she almost ran into the arms of Michael Arranstown!

He stopped short and apologized, and then he said:

"I was coming to find you. There is something I must say to you. Mrs. Forster's sitting-room is close here. Will you come with me in there for a moment? We can be alone."

Sabine hesitated. She looked up at him, so tall and masterful and astonishingly handsome—and then she obeyed him meekly, and he led the way into a cosy little room unlighted except for a glowing mass of coals.

Michael turned on one electric lamp, and they both went over to the chimney piece. Intense excitement and emotion filled them. He tried to search her face with his eyes, but she looked into the fire with lowered head. He spoke almost fiercely:

"I cannot try to guess what caused you to pretend you did not recognize me when we met at Héronac. That false step has created all this hopeless tangle. I will not judge you, but only blame my own weakness in falling in with your plan." He clasped his hands together rather wildly. "I was so stunned with surprise to see you, and overcome with the knowledge that I had just given Henry my word of honor that I would not interfere with him, or make love to the lady we were going to see—Mrs. Howard, who was married to a ruffian of an American husband shut up in a madhouse or home for inebriates! My God! lies from the very beginning." And he gave a little laugh. "I had forgotten for the moment that you had said you would call yourself by that name, but I remembered it afterwards. You had not decided if you would be a widow, do you recollect? And you

wanted a coronet for your handkerchiefs and note-paper?"

Sabine quivered under the lash of his scorn.

"You maddened me that afternoon and at dinner, too," he went on, "and I made resolutions and then broke them. But each time I did, I was filled with remorse and contrition about Henry—and, I am ashamed to confess, I was madly jealous, too. At last, I saw you in the garden together and knew I ought to go at once."

Here his voice broke a little, and he unclasped his hands. She raised her head defiantly now, and flashed back at him:

"I understand you had admitted to being a dog in the manger—you were always an animal of sorts!"

This told: he grew paler, and into his blue eyes there came a look of pain.

"You have a perfect right to say that to me if you choose. It probably is true. I am a very strong man with tremendous passions which have always been in my race; but I am not altogether a brute—because, although I want you myself with more intensity than I have ever wanted anything in my life, I am going to give you up to Henry. I have been through hell ever since I came from France. I have been weak too, and could not face the final wrench—but I am determined at last to do what is straight. To-morrow I shall instruct my lawyers to begin proceedings, and I suppose in two months or less you will be free."

Sabine grew white and cold; her voice was hardly audible as she asked, looking up at him:

"What made you come here to-night?"

He took a step nearer to her, while he reclasped his hands, as if he feared that he might be tempted to touch her.

"I came because I wanted to see you so intensely that I could not stay away. I came because I wished to convince myself again that you loved Henry, so that there could be no shadow of uncertainty in what I intended to do."

"Well?"

"I saw that, whether you love him or not, you desire that I shall think that you do; and so at dinner I played for my own pleasure, the die being cast—

because something else had occurred before dinner which makes it of no consequence to my decision now, whether you do or do not love him. It is Henry's great love for you which is the factor, since he says to part from you would end his life. I could not commit the frightful cruelty and dishonor of upsetting his plans, because he trusts us both, as you said; and since you are originally to blame for concealing the truth from him, I am to blame for abetting you."

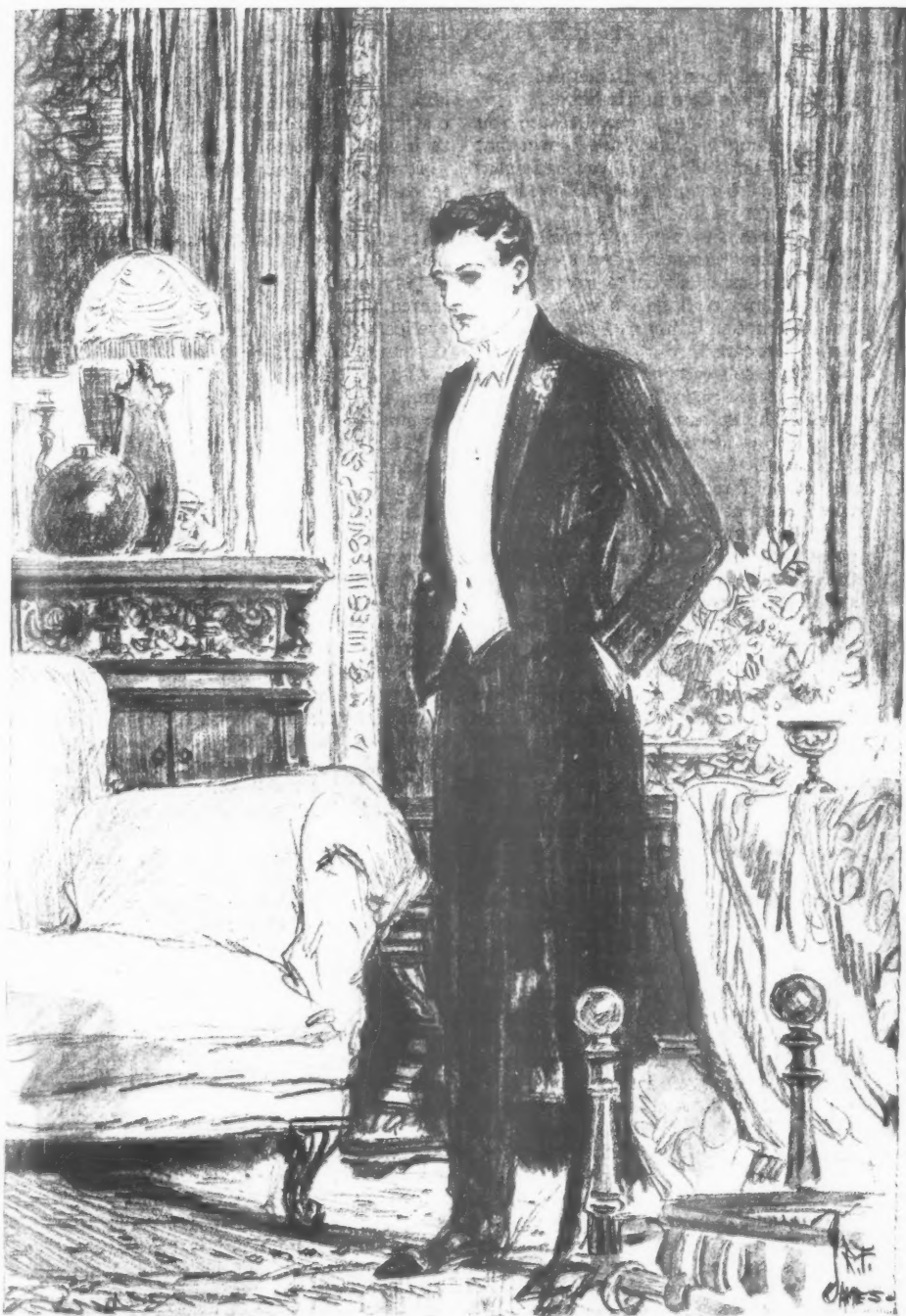
Sabine was trembling; her whole fabric of peace and happiness in the future seemed to be falling to pieces. She could only look at Michael with piteous violet eyes out of which all the defiance had gone. Her slender figure swayed a little, and she leaned against the mantelpiece.

"My God!" he said, with a fresh clenching of his strong hands, "I would not have believed I could suffer so. As it is the last time we shall ever talk to one another, perhaps, I want you to know about things, to hear it all. I would like to ask you again to forgive me for long ago, but I suppose you feel that that is past forgiveness. If you had not left me, I would soon have made you forget that you had been angry, as I thought indeed I had already done that night of our wedding. I would have won you into complete forgetfulness as time went on." His voice vibrated with a deep note of tenderness.

"And what had begun just in mad haste would have grown into real love between us, for we were made for one another, Sabine; did you never think of that? Just the same sort of natures, all alive and passionate, with the same wild fire running in our blood. We would have been supremely happy! But I was so frightfully arrogant in those days, and when I woke I was deadily ashamed of myself, and then furious with you for daring to defy me by going. No one had ever disobeyed me. But it was shame, really, which made me agree to join Latimer Berkeley's expedition at once—the letter came by the early post. I wanted to get away and try to forget what I had done; and since you had expressed your will, I just left you to stand by it."



He grew paler, and into his blue eyes there came a look of pain. "You have a perfect right to say that to me if you choose. altogether a brute—because, although I want you myself with more intensity than I have ever since I came from France. I have been weak, too, and could not face



It probably is true. I am a very strong man with tremendous passions which have always been in my race; but I am not wanted anything in my life, I am going to give you up to Henry. I have been through hell ever the final wrench—but I am determined at last to do what is straight."

He leaned upon the mantelpiece now and buried his face in his hands.

"Oh, how wrong I was, because you were so young I should have known that you could not judge, that you had acted hastily, and I should have followed you and brought you back."

His tones shook with anguish now. "Well, I am punished—and so all that is left for us to do is to say good-by, my dear, and each go his way. You, at least, are not suffering as I am—because you do not care."

A little sob came in Sabine's throat, and she could not reply. She could only take in the splendor of his figure and his grace as he leaned there with dark, bent head. And so, in a silence that seemed to throb and thrill, they stood with hearts at breaking point.

Then he controlled himself; he must go at once or he could no longer answer for what he might do. She looked so sweet and sorrowful standing close to his side, her violet eyes lowered so that their long lashes made a shadow upon her dimpled cheek.

Intense magnetic attraction drew them nearer and nearer. "Sabine!" he cried at last, hoarsely, as though the words were torn from his tortured heart. "There is something about you which tells me that you do not love Henry—that he has never made you thrill—as I once made you thrill, and could make you thrill again." He stretched out his arms in pain. "The temptation is frightful—terrible—just to kiss you once more! Darling—oh! I cannot bear it. I must go!" He took a step away from her.

But the Moment for Sabine had come; she could resist its force no more; every nerve in her whole body was quivering—every half-guessed emotion was stirring her soul. Her whole being seemed to be convulsed in intense love. The reality had materialized of the echoes she had often dimly felt from that night of long ago.

The wild passion which she had feared, and only that very evening had repudiated as being an impossible experience for her, had now overtaken her, and she could struggle no more.

"Michael!" she whispered breathlessly, and held out her arms.

With a cry of joy he clasped her to him, and pressed her lips in fierce ecstasy. All the pent-up feelings in both their souls let loose at last.

It was a moment of unutterable bliss to each of them, and caused time and place and all other things to be forgotten in a glory as great as though eternity had come.

"My darling, my darling!" he murmured, kissing her hair and brow and eyelids. "Oh! the hideous cruelty that this must be good-by!"

But Sabine clung to him half sobbing, telling him she could not bear it; he must not leave her now.

"Darling," he besought her, while he unclasped her tender hands from round his neck. "Darling, do not tempt me. It is frightful pain, but I must keep my word. You had reason once to think that I was an uncontrolled brute, but you shall not be able to do so any more. I would never respect myself—or you—again if I let you make me faithless to Henry now. It is cruel sorrow, but we cannot think of ourselves; you know, we used too lightly for our own ends what should have been a sacred tie. Do you remember, Sabine? We swore to God to love and be faithful for ever—not meaning a word we said—and now we are punished—" A great sob shook his deep voice.

"Darling child—I love you madly, madly, Sabine—dear little one—but you and I are just driftwood floating down the tide—not like Henry, who is a splendid fellow of great use to England. It is impossible that his whole life should be ruined and sacrificed for our selfishness. Darling,"—and he paused and drew her to him again fondly—"it is our own fault. We have let the situation develop through indecision and, I expect, wounded vanity and weakness; and now we must have strength to abide by our words. Henry isn't young like we are, you see. I honestly believe it would knock him out if anything went wrong."

But Sabine clung to him still. She could think of nothing but that she loved him madly, and that he was her mate and her husband; why must she be torn from his side for the happiness of any other man?



She buried her face in her hands and sobbed brokenly. "And even now I did not tell you all."

She was in an agony of grief. And then suddenly back to her came the words of Père Anselme, heavy as the stroke of doom. Yes, she had taken matters into her own hands and presumed to direct fate, and now all that she could do was to be true to her word. Michael was right; they must say good-bye. Henry must not be sacrificed.

She raised her pitiful face from his breast where it was buried, and he framed it in both his hands, and it would have been difficult to recognize his bold eyes, so filled were they with tenderness and love.

"Sabine," he commanded, fondly, "tell me that, after all, you have forgiven me for making you stay that night. You know that we were perfectly happy earlier. It will be such pain for me to have to remember all the rest of my life that you hold resentment. Darling, if only you had stayed. Oh! I would have cherished and petted you so." Here he smoothed her hair, and murmured love words in her ear with

his wonderful charm, until Sabine felt that neither heaven nor earth nor anything else mattered.

"Sweetheart," he went on, "we have got to part in a moment, but I just must know if you love me a little in spite of everything. I *must know*."

He kissed her red full lips with immense tenderness. Even in this moment of agonized parting, he exulted in the intoxication of love he had created in her eyes. There were no wiles for the enslaving of a woman's heart of which he was not master. The question whether he ought to employ them on this occasion was forgotten. He was doing what he thought was the only honorable thing possible in giving up this glorious happiness; they were going to part for the rest of their lives; he must make her tell him that she loved him; he wanted to hear her say the words.

"Sabine—little darling—answer me," he pleaded.

She flung her arms round his neck, her whole body vibrating with emotion.

"I love you absolutely, Michael," she cried, "and I have always forgiven you. I was mad to leave you, and I have longed often to go back. Oh! I would sooner be dead than not be your wife."

They both were white now, the misery was so great. He knew he must go at once, or he could never go at all. They were too racked with present suffering to think what the future could contain, or of the growing agony of the long weary days, and how they could ever bear them.

"My God, this is past endurance!" Michael exclaimed frantically, and strained her to him in wild grief. Then he almost flung her from him, and as she staggered to a sofa she heard the door close, and knew that chapter of her life was done.

She sat there for a while gazing into the fire, too stunned with misery even to think; but presently everything came to her with merciless clearness. How small she had been all along! Instead of waiting until she heard the truth, she had let a wretched paragraph in a newspaper inflame her wounded vanity, so that she gave her promise to Henry there and then, putting the rope round her neck with her own hands. And afterwards, instead of being brave and true, wounded vanity again had caused her to tighten the knot. She remembered Henry's words when he had implored her to tell him what were the actual wishes of her heart—and how she had cut off all retreat by her answer. She remembered all his goodness to her and how she had accepted it as her due, making him care for her more and more as each day came.

"I have been a hopeless coward," she moaned, "a paltry, vain, hopeless coward. I should have owned Michael was my husband immediately. Henry could have got over it then, and now we might be happy—but it is too late; there is nothing to be done!" She buried her face in her hands and sobbed brokenly. "Oh, my love, my love—and even now I did not tell you all."

The clock struck one—supper would be beginning and she must go down. If Michael could bear this agony and behave like a gentleman, she also must

play her part with dignity. Henry would be waiting at the bottom of the stairs.

She went rapidly to her room and removed all traces of emotion, and then she returned to the hall by the way she had come.

"I was growing quite anxious, dearest," Lord Fordyce told her, as he advanced to meet her when she came down the stairs. "I feared you were ill, and was just coming to find you. Let us go straight in to supper now—you look rather pale. I must take care of you and give you some champagne." And he placed her hand in his arm fondly and led her along.

They found chairs, which had been kept for them at a center table near their hostess and Moravia, and here they sat down. Michael was nowhere in sight, but presently he came in with one of the house-party, and Mrs. Forster beckoned them to her—and thus it happened that he was again at Sabine's side. His eyes had a reckless, stony stare in them, and he confined his conversation to the lady he had taken in. And Henry, who was watching him, whispered to Sabine:

"He is often in some scrape, Michael—something must have culminated to-night. I have never seen him looking so haggard and pale."

Sabine drank down her glass of champagne; she thought she could no longer support the situation. She almost felt she hated Henry and his devotion; it was paralyzing her, suffocating her—crushing her life. Michael never spoke to her—beyond a casual word—and at length they all went back to the ball-room, where an "extra" was being played. Michael for a moment stood by her side. Then a sudden madness came to them, as their eyes met, and he held out his arm.

"This is my dance, I think, Mrs. Howard," he said with careless sang froid, and he whirled her away into the middle of the room. They both danced divinely; they never stopped until the music ended. It was a two-step, and all the young people clapped for the band to go on. So once more they started with the throng. They had not spoken a single word; it was a strange comfort to them just to be together—half anguish, half



They found chairs, which had been kept for them at a center table near their hostess and Moravia, and here they sat down.
Michael was nowhere in sight.

bliss—but as the last bars died away, Michael whispered in her ear:

"I am going to say good-night to Rose. She is accustomed to my ways. I have ordered my motor, and I am going home—I cannot bear it another minute. If I stayed until to-morrow I should break my word. I love you to absolute madness—Good-by." And without waiting for her to answer, he left her close to Henry, and turning, was lost in the crowd.

Suddenly the whole room reeled to Sabine; the lights danced in her eyes, and a rushing sound came in her ears. She would have fallen forward, only Lord Fordyce caught her arm, while he cried, in solicitous consternation:

"My dearest, you have danced too much. You feel faint—let me take you out of all this into the cool."

But Sabine pulled herself together and assured him she was all right—she had been giddy for a moment—he need not distress himself; and as they walked into the conservatory she protested vehemently that she had never been at so delightful a ball.

CHAPTER XVIII



SOBBING wind and a weeping rain beat round the walls of Arranstoun, and the great gray turrets and towers made a grim picture against the November sky, as its master came through the postern gate and across the lawn to his private rooms. He had been tramping the moorland beyond

the park without Binko or a gun, his thoughts too tempestuous to bear with even those companionships. For the letter to Messrs. McDonald and Malden had gone, and the first act of the tragedy of his freedom had begun.

It was a big price to pay for honor and friendship, but while they had been

brigands and robbers for hundreds of years, the Arranstouns had not been dishonorable men; once or twice in their history they had done a great and generous thing.

Michael was not of the character which lauded itself; indeed, he was never introspective at all. He was just virile and living and breathing, his actions governed by an inherited sense of the fitness of things for a gentleman's code, which, unless it was swamped, as on one occasion it had been by violent passion, seldom led him wrong.

Now he determined never to look ahead or picture the blankness of his days as they must become with no hope of ever seeing Sabine. He supposed vaguely that the pain would grow less in time. He should have to play a lot of games, and take tremendous interest in his tenants and his property and perhaps presently go into Parliament. And if all that failed, he could make some expedition into the wilds again. He was too healthy and well-balanced to have any morbid ideas, even in this moment of deep suffering.

When he had changed his soaking garments, he came back into his sitting-room and pulled Binko to his knees. The dog and his fat wrinkles seemed some kind of comfort to him.

"She remembered you, Binko old man," he said, caressing the creature's ears. "She is the sweetest little darling in all the world. You would have loved her soft brown hair and her round dimpled cheek. And she loves your master, Binko, just as he loves her; she has forgiven him for everything of long ago—and if she could, she would come back here, and live with us and make us divinely happy—as we believed she was going to do once when we were young."

And then he thought suddenly of Henry's home—the stately Elizabethan house amidst luxuriant, peaceful scenery—not grim and strong like Arranstoun, though she preferred gaunt castles, evidently, since she had bought Héronac for her own. But the thought of Henry's home and her adorning it brought too intimate pictures to his imagination; they galled him so that at last he could not bear it, and started to his feet.

It was possible to part from her and go away, but it was not possible to contemplate calmly the fact of her being the wife of another man. Material things came always more vividly to Michael than spiritual ones, and the vision he had conjured up was one of Sabine encircled by Henry's arms. This was unbearable—and before he was aware of it he found he was clenching his fists in rage, and that Binko was sitting on his haunches, blinking at him, with his head on one side in his endeavors to understand.

Michael pulled himself together and laughed bitterly.

"I must never think of it, old man," he told the dog, "or I shall go mad."

Then he sat down again. With what poignant regret he looked back upon his original going to China! If only he had stayed and gone after her, that next day, and seized her again, and brought her back here to this room, they would have had five years of happiness. She was far sweeter now than she had been then, and he could have watched her developing, instead of her coming to perfection all alone.

"I wish she had had a baby, Binko," he remarked. "Then she would have been obliged to return to me at once of her own accord."

Binko grunted and slobbered his acquiescence and sympathy, with his wise old fat head poked into his master's arm.

"You are trying to tell me that as I had gone off to China, she

couldn't have done that, you old scoundrel. And of course you are right. But she did not try to, you know. There was no letter from her among the hundreds which were waiting for me at Hong Kong—or here when I got back. She could have sent me a cable, and I would have returned from anywhere like a shot. But she did not want me then; she wanted to be free—and now, when she does, her hands are already tied. The whole cursed thing is our own fault, and that is what is the biggest pain, old dog."

Then his thoughts wandered back to their scene in Rose Forster's sitting-room—that was pleasure indeed! And he leaned back in his big chair and let himself dream. He could hear her words telling him that she loved him, and could feel her soft lips pressed in passion to his own.

"My God! this is too much," he cried.

And so it went through days and nights of anguish, until despite all his will and his strong health and love of sport and vigorous work, the agony of desire for Sabine grew into an obsession.

Whatever sins he had committed in his life, indeed his punishment had come.

Sabine, for her part, found the days not worth living. Nothing in life or nature stays at a standstill; so it was that her emotions for Michael did not remain the same, but grew constantly as the certainty that they were parted forever forced itself upon her.



The letter to Messrs. McDonald and Malden had gone.

The next installment of "The Man and the Moment," will be in the August Red Book, on the news-stands July 23rd.



The Nemesis.

RED CEDAR!

By Ellis Parker Butler

Author of "Pigs is Pigs," "Philo Gubb," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY REA IRVIN

IF a person of ordinary weight may be tortured to sleeplessness by love, imagine the throes of Syrilla, the fat woman, when she succumbs to Cupid! That is the basis of this new story Mr. Butler has found in a circus freak tent. The very fact that he has written it guarantees its humorous quality.

WELL, believe me!" said Syrilla, the Fat Lady, as she waddled into the freak tent of the Great Monster Combined Shows, "believe me, dearest, this smell aint right!"

Maggie, the Circassian Girl, carrying her wig in her hand, sniffed the air.

"You got a whiff of my wig, sweetheart," she said, holding it up to the nose of Syrilla. "Honest, you got nerves like a scared mouse. Every little thing upsets you. There aint anything to be agitated about. What was it you smelled, red cedar?"

Syrilla sniffed the wig. It was, as a Circassian Girl's wig should be, a glorious mass of golden red, each hair standing erect. One of the hairs tickled Syrilla's nose, and she sneezed. When she sneezed she shook like calves'-foot jelly during an earthquake.

"*Ka-choo!*" she sneezed. "There goes an ounce of good fat, and—*ka-choo!* there goes another! *Ka—ka—ka—choo!*

Oh, dearie! I knew there was trouble in that smell. I got a perfectly prophetic nose."

"Now, don't get hysterics," said Maggie pleadingly. "It aint anything but the odor of the new red cedar trunk I got to keep the moths out of my hair. Goodness knows it is difficult enough for a lady to preserve her beauty, when every time she puts her hair away, the moths chew it all up. There aint no occult meanin' to that smell, Syrilla. It's cedar trunk."

"It's occult enough for me," said Syrilla, "when it leads up to three sneezes at an ounce a sneeze. Fat I am, and fat I must stay, and the fatter the better, for you know as well as I do, dearie, how I'm contracted with by the management—fifteen dollars a week for the first four hundred pounds and a cent a week per ounce for all over. If that smell does no more than make me sneeze, it does enough. I can't afford to sneeze much at a cent a sneeze."

The Great Monster Combined Shows were to show at Cedarville that afternoon and evening. It was now afternoon, and Syrilla and Maggie were the first of the Side Show ladies and gentlemen to finish their meal in the mess tent. Syrilla had never appeared more lovely than as she entered the Side Show tent that day. In the week since Waw-Waw, the Mexican Hairless Dog-Man, had joined the show, Syrilla had gained seven pounds, for she was living in a heaven of requited love, and her appetite was strong and hearty, and increasing daily.

On the other hand Mr. Lonergan, the Living Skeleton, had he been an avaricious man, might also have rejoiced, for his contract with the management was that he should be paid fifteen dollars a week flat, and ten cents a week additional for every ounce he fell below eighty pounds. In the past week jealousy had caused his salary to advance one dollar and sixty cents. The ache of a bruised heart had peeled a full pound of flesh off bones that had little more flesh on them to begin with than have the bones of a Thanksgiving turkey on the fourth—or cat-feed—day after that national feast.

To be brutally brief—and it is best to be brutal sometimes—Mr. Lonergan loved Syrilla, but Syrilla loved Waw-Waw. Ever since this fellow Waw-Waw had entered the Side Show tent as the field secretary of the Riverbank Social Service League, the fair and fat Syrilla had loved him passionately, and when, for love of her and to continue his good work, he had organized the World's Greatest Combined Shows Freak Tent Literary Society and had—because of his appropriate baldness—accepted the position of Waw-Waw or Mexican Chihuahua Hairless Dog-Man, and agreed to travel with the Side Show, Syrilla began to “lay on” flesh, and Mr. Lonergan to lose in equal proportion.

It was only natural that the freaks—as the ladies and gentlemen of the Side Show permitted themselves to be called—should take sides. The men—Mr. Hoxie, the Strong Man; Major Ching, the Giant; General Thumb, the Dwarf; and others—were partisans of Mr.

Lonergan. The ladies—Maggie, the Circassian; Princess Zozo, the Snake-charmer; and the rest—were strong for Syrilla. Mr. Dorgan, manager of the Side Show and lecturer on the freaks, remained neutral.

The favoritism of the ladies was not due to any facial attractiveness of Mr. Winterberry (that was Waw-Waw's birth name) but was due to the charming manner in which he conducted the meetings of the Side Show Tent Literary Society each circus day from three to five o'clock. When explaining the deeper meanings of Emerson's essays or elucidating one of Browning's more muggy poems or reciting a bit of Omar Khayyam in the original Persian, Mr. Winterberry was indeed a dear creature, and seemed to bring true culture to the Side Show tent. Sitting in his cage with a neatly embroidered dog-blanket strapped around his middle and a silver dog-collar on his neck, Mr. Winterberry, while conducting the Literary Society, was too sweet for anything. The ladies of the Side Show adored him. The men, however—and especially Mr. Lonergan—were jealous.

“Him!” said Mr. Lonergan scornfully. “Him copping off Syrilla's love and affection that way! He aint even a freak. Kind Nature aint shaped him up with a lavish hand, like she has you, Major Ching, and she aint run short of stuff when makin' him like she did with you, General Thumb. Nor she aint peeled him thin like she has me. She didn't do nothin' to him but make him bald, and bein' bald aint bein' a freak.”

“It once misfortune,” said Major Ching, who had a wonderful pigtail.

“Not even a misfortune,” said Mr. Lonergan. “I read about it in the paper the other day. Baldness aint nothin' but a disease. You can cure it for a dollar a bottle, and—say!”

“Say what?” asked Hoxie.

“Nothing!” said Mr. Lonergan hastily. “Nothing at all! Ah—let's change the subject.”

Thinking the topic was too harrowing for Mr. Lonergan, they did change the subject; but although they talked of Ibsen—one of whose plays Mr. Winterberry had introduced at the last Literary

Society meeting—they noticed that Mr. Loneragan kept repeating, "A dollar a bottle! A dollar a bottle!" in an undertone.

Mr. Loneragan entered the Side Show tent, arm in arm with General Thumb. On account of the small stature of General Thumb the only way in which the two men could walk arm in arm was for General Thumb to put one arm around Mr. Loneragan's knee. General Thumb, on account of his size, and Mr. Loneragan, because of his desire to avoid fleshiness, ate but little, but Syrilla was a very greedy eater. She ate rapidly, so usually she was the first out of the mess tent. Maggie, the Circassian Girl, was Syrilla's bosom companion, and usually stopped eating when Syrilla stopped. She was an easy going feeder, being willing to sit and eat all day, or to snatch a hasty bite and flee.

As Mr. Loneragan entered the tent he sniffed the air.

"What—*fnf-fnf*—is that—*fnf-fnf*—funny smell?" he asked General Thumb.

"Cedar, isn't it? Red cedar. That's what it is—red cedar," said General Thumb.

"Oh!" said Mr. Loneragan with great relief, but he hurried to his platform and peered into a large basket that stood behind his chair. What he saw there evidently relieved his apprehension. In the basket were twelve bottles, and all were securely corked. Each bore a label, "Dashby's Old Reliable Cedarine, the Only Reliable Hair Grower. Guaranteed to Grow a Complete and Luxurious Head of Hair on the Baldest Head in Three Applications." Finding the bottles undisturbed and unopened, Mr. Loneragan took one of them and seated himself on his platform chair. He studied the label carefully.

"Cedarine," it said, "is a compound of numerous extremely strong drugs, its leading component being triple extract of the oil of red cedar. It is well known that red cedar is recommended by all authorities for the construction of chests for the storage of furs, etc., but until Dr. Dashby's experiments with cedar oil it was not known that red cedar grows hair more rapidly and more surely than

any other drug. Until this discovery it was supposed that furs stored in cedar chests were kept in good condition because red cedar killed the moths. This is not so. Red Cedar does not kill moths. As a matter of fact, moths thrive in red cedar chests and develop enormous appetites, *but the mere odor of red cedar causes the hair to grow on furs more rapidly than the moths can devour it.* Cedarine is four hundred and seventeen times as strong as odor of cedar."

As Mr. Loneragan finished reading this, Mr. Winterberry, his bald head glowing in the light, entered the tent. Mr. Loneragan hastily stuffed the bottle of Cedarine inside his jersey, where it was but poorly hidden. The outlines of the bottle would have been plainly visible to any inquisitive eye, but all eyes were fixed on Mr. Winterberry, who, as he entered the tent, stopped short, uttered a cry, and turned white. He would have fallen had not Mr. Hoxie caught him. Syrilla placed her hand on her heart and half rose from her chair on her platform. Mr. Dorgan hurried to the side of the nearly fainting Mr. Winterberry.

"What's the matter here. Waw-Waw?" he asked.

"The odor!" cried Mr. Winterberry. "Quick! Hide me!"

There certainly was an unusual odor in the tent. Instead of the rich, pungent and usual odor of damp pine sawdust, every nose recognized red cedar. Mr. Dorgan slapped Mr. Winterberry on the back.

"Come! come!" he said. "Brace up. It aint what you think. I forgot what you told me, Winterberry, or I would have given you fair notice. Look here!"

He stooped and took up a handful of sawdust from the ground.

"Red cedar sawdust," he said. "We ran out of sawdust for the big show and the freak tent, that's all. Couldn't get any pine sawdust in this town, so we had to take red cedar sawdust. Now, don't worry. It's only for to-day. We've got another car of pine that's to meet us to-morrow."

Mr. Winterberry seemed relieved. He struggled with himself a moment, regained his self control, and smiled.

"It gave me a shock," he said.

He went toward his cage, but on the way he stooped down and looked under all the platforms. He peered into the cage itself before he climbed in. He looked anxiously about as he buckled on his collar and strapped on his blanket.

"Your tootsy woots looked like he'd had a shock," said Maggie to Syrilla.

"And I don't wonder at it, dearie," said Syrilla. "Red cedar aint a circus smell at all. I been doin' this platform work all my life and this is the first time my nose ever missed smellin' pine sawdust. I hope to goodness I'm a bum prophet, dearie, but I got a hunch this red cedar smell is bad luck for some fond heart in this show."

"Of course I don't mind it like you do," said Maggie, "because I've got the same perfumery on my hair, but you've got me worried too. I wonder if Mr. Dorgan would fetch a camel or something from the menagerie tent just long enough to take the kibosh off this smell. Did you ever hear that red cedar smell was bad luck?"

"No, dearie," said Syrilla, "but anything out of the ordinary is bad luck in a freak tent. We'll have a blow-down or somethin' as sure as fate. It is goin' against the laws of nature to give a show without pine sawdust. All I got to say is I hope fate aint goin' to knock Mr. Winterberry."

"You poor little thing!" said Maggie. "He's just life and all to you, aint he? Has he asked you the fatal question yet?"

Syrilla blushed.

"He would 've done so

last evening," she said, "but I stood him off, dearie. I may be fattish but I've got the same finer feelin's as any other woman of my sex and I refuse to be proposed to un-hugged."

"Un-hugged?" questioned Maggie.

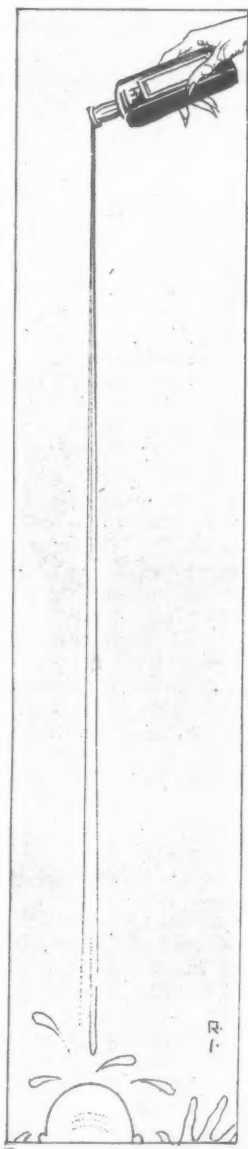
"You know what I mean," said Syrilla. "It's in every book. *Lord Algenon* put his arm around the gloryus creature and pressed her to him, mutterin' the words that asked her to be his. I shouldn't think myself engaged without an arm put round me, dearie. So I stopped Mr. Winterberry at the start."

"But—but—" stammered Maggie, "but how can he? I don't know any livin' man, sweetheart, that could get his arms clear around you, unless maybe it was Mr. Zan-Zan, the Human Ape, that used to travel with Scholby & Betts' Grand United Circuses and Menageries."

"Love ought to find a way," said Syrilla. "I heard of a vaudeville feller that said his wife was so big he hugged her half way round and made a chalk mark and then went round on the other side and hugged that side. I would 've told that to Mr. Winterberry but he's so diminutive he'd have to make three hugs of me, and, believe me, sweetheart, a hug that comes in three sections aint what a lady would call a passionate hug. So he's goin' to get a rope."

"What for?" asked Maggie, her mouth open with surprise.

"So he can propose wedlock to me this evening on the way down to the car," said Syrilla. "It aint what I'd like, exactly. It aint the



With a quick turn of the hand Major Ching inverted the bottle.

sort of hug a slim lady could expect, but adipose has its drawbacks, dearie, and Mr. Winterberry's arms aint no more than normal for his size. I guess if he sort of lassos me round the waist and pulls hard on the ends of the rope it will be as near a whole hug as I can expect until I quit the profession and bant down."

"You poor dear!" said Maggie pityingly. "Well, I'm as jealous of my husband as any woman is, I guess, but if it will accommodate you I'll lend you Mr. Lucy this evening to hug one side while Mr. Winterberry hugs the other."

"You got a good heart, dearie," said Syrilla, "but I guess me and Mr. Winterberry will try to get along alone. Men is peculiar. They like to do their own huggin', even if they have to take a rope to it."

For a minute or two the ladies and gentlemen were busy arranging their photographs in a tempting manner preparatory to receiving the usual afternoon gathering of admirers—at ten cents admission each—and Mr. Dorgan, after a quick glance around to see that everything was ready for the opening of the tent flap, walked over to Syrilla's platform. He leaned against it.

"See our little Mexican Hairless turn pale when he smelled the red cedar?" he asked.

"Yes, dearie," said Syrilla, "and it touched me to the heart. Any jar that knocks Mr. Winterberry reflects itself in my own bosom."

"I can see you are some gone on him," said Dorgan, grinning. "That's why I'm talking to you. Funny thing about our little Waw-Waw. He told me about this red cedar thing day before yesterday. I sort of forgot it when I was spreading the sawdust, or I'd have told him to look out for the smell. I don't blame him for fainting."

"What do you mean, Mr. Dorgan?" asked Syrilla tensely.

"Why," said Mr. Dorgan carelessly, "he told me that if any lady ever entered the Side Show with an odor of red cedar pretty strong about her, to give him the high sign so he could duck to the back of his cage, and that he wanted me to

pass him by as if the cage was empty until the dame quit the show."

"Dame?" said Syrilla. She would have stiffened if there had been any stiffness in her form. As it happened, there was not, so she shook, jelly-like.

"Ex-wife," said Dorgan.

"Oh!" said Syrilla, greatly relieved. "You gave me a shock, dearie. I thought perhaps it was his wife. What's an ex-wife chasin' him for?"

"Allermony," said Dorgan. "He never paid her a cent and there's fifteen dollars a week due her, for one hundred and eight weeks, and one hundred and eight times fifteen is—"

"The cat!" said Syrilla. "To be chasin' the poor man that way!"

"Cat's the name, all right," said Dorgan. "I'd have got a divorce from her myself, the same as he did, if she tried to dope my head with any patent stuff. I say hair'll grow or it wont grow, and it don't do no good to fumigate it or spill stuff on it or nothin'. But her pa invented the stuff—"

"What stuff?" asked Syrilla.

"Cedarine," said Dorgan. "It's for the hair. That's how Waw-Waw figured he would know when she came—the cedar smell. He met her first in a shop window, and he thought it was love at first sight—the graceful way she tilted Cedarine onto her hair out of a bottle and then combed her raven locks—so he married her. He says home was like the inside of a cedar chest after that. There wasn't a moth dared come within two miles of the house, and his lady Cedarine her hair before and after meals and before and after everything else. It was all right while love's young dream was humming along. He said the smell of cedar was like a feller's girl's favorite perfume is to other fellers. He couldn't sharpen a lead pencil without his pulses beatin' faster. And then the old man come between them. In-laws always make trouble."

"What did the old feller do, dearie?"

"Well," said Dorgan, "as near as I can make out, he said that a head as bald as Waw-Waw's didn't belong. He said a polished billiard ball like Waw-Waw's was a detriment to business, and had no place in the family of a man that

was producing a bottled stuff guaranteed to raise hair on vitrified paving brick. So he wanted Waw-Waw to use a bottle or two. Waw-Waw wouldn't do it. Then he tried to get him to use enough to grow eyebrows, anyway, but Waw-Waw wouldn't. And then the wife she—Hello! Show's open!"

Mr. Dorgan darted away. The crowd began to enter. The ballyhoo man outside pounded on his ticket box with a wooden paddle and yelled his usual story of the wonders of the Side Show. With the first contingent, Mr. Dorgan began the rounds, stopping first before the Living Skeleton, then before the Giant, then before Mr. Winterberry's cage, and so on. Mr. Winterberry, as usual, came to the bars of his cage and allowed the children to feed him dog biscuit. He allowed them to pat his head. Mr. Winterberry being, in his character of Mexican Hairless Dog-Man, the greatest novelty in the show, received the greatest attention from the visitors. The crowd had seen giants before. They hurried past Major Ching, hardly looking at him, in their haste to see what was in the cage, and seeing it was Waw-Waw, they hung there until Mr. Dorgan had to beg them to come away.

"Cha-e-koo-kah-kee-coo!" said Major Ching, or words to that effect.

"What you say?" asked Mr. Lonerger.

"Meckliclan bow-wow spoil show," said Major Ching bitterly. "No folkee look at Ching. Me hatee Meckliclan bow-wow."

"Here, too, old man," said Mr. Lonerger. "Want to help me get rid of him?"

"Helpee plenty quick," said Ching eagerly.

"All right. Listen!" said Mr. Lonerger in a tense whisper. "He's no good to Dorgan except as a Mexican hairless, is he? Look here!"

He drew forth the bottle of Cedarine and handed it to Major Ching.

"Make hair grow," he said. "Put on head three times, make plenty hair grow. You help?"

Major Ching's little oblique eyes sparkled. Mr. Lonerger reached back and took three more bottles from his basket. He removed the corks of the

four bottles and placed them in Major Ching's hand.

The top of Waw-Waw's cage was of wire. The side toward Major Ching was solid. Mr. Lonerger pointed to the top of the cage with one bony finger.

"Pour on head," he said, and Major Ching grinned wickedly. The Major arose to his feet. When standing, his head pressed against the top of the tent. Very quietly he peered down into the interior of the cage. Mr. Winterberry was now sitting in a far corner calmly reading a copy of the *North American Review*. With a quick turn of the wrist Major Ching inverted the bottles, and the entire contents—pure Cedarine, four hundred and seventeen times as strong as the odor of cedar—deluged Mr. Winterberry. He sprang up gasping. His head was dripping Cedarine and his eyes were full of it. He tried to wipe his head with his hands. The odor almost suffocated him. Major Ching dropped the bottles over the skirt of the tent, and when Dorgan came running to see why Mr. Winterberry was yelling like mad, Major Ching and Mr. Lonerger seemed to be as interested and as sympathetic as anyone.

"What's the matter?" asked Mr. Dorgan.

"Somebody poured something on my head!" spluttered Mr. Winterberry. "Some one tried to drown me."

Mr. Dorgan mounted Major Ching's platform and looked through the opening between the top of the tent and its side wall.

"Wagon standing out there," he said. "Somebody's joke, Winterberry. Somebody got on the wagon and doused you with water. I'll have the wagon removed."

He jumped down.

"Take my word," he said as he turned away, "this is the last time I let them put cedar sawdust in this tent. Smell is strong enough to gag a wart hog."

Mr. Winterberry was trembling.

"It isn't safe," he said nervously. "I should call it distinctly dangerous. If anyone was in fear that some one partial to the odor of cedar might enter the premises intent on harm, how could one recognize the said party?"

"He couldn't, not in a thousand years," said Mr. Dorgan, and he went out to have the wagon removed from behind Mr. Winterberry's cage. When he returned, the second assortment of visitors was ready to be shown through the tent, and Mr. Dorgan led them to Mr. Lonergan's platform.

"This, ladies and gents," he said in his rotund voice, "is the world-renowned Living Skeleton, the thinnest man on the face of the habitable globe. He was born—"

In the rear of the crowd there was one person paying no attention to Mr. Dorgan or the Living Skeleton. This woman, upon entering the tent, had glanced carelessly here and there, and when she had seen the face and head of Mr. Winterberry she had slipped behind others of the crowd, where she could observe Mr. Winterberry without being observed. She was a large woman with masses of jet black hair, and not only did she have huge and black eyebrows but a well defined mustache as well. The gasp of surprise she had uttered upon sight of Mr. Winterberry in a cage and in a dog blanket was not without meaning. She was the daughter of the manufacturer of Cedarine. Her eyes blazed and her face and hands worked convulsively, but upon glancing about she controlled herself. Her glance had revealed to her that there were no loose tent-stakes or other weapons in the tent, and while Mr. Dorgan lectured on Major Ching—to an unheeding crowd that had passed on to Waw-Waw's cage—the woman slipped from the tent.

"This, ladies and gents," Mr. Dorgan was saying, "is Syrilla, known as the Human Mountain. Her arm, by actual measurement—"

A scream of rage ran through the tent. The entire crowd turned and ran toward the cage of the Mexican Chihuahua Hairless Dog, too late to see Major Ching drop four more empty bottles of Cedarine out of the tent, but in time to see Mr. Winterberry rubbing his head wildly with his dog blanket. The ladies turned hastily away. The men stared curiously at the strange antics of the reputedly gentle dog.

"Hyderfoby!" said one man. "Shuttin' him up in this heat is what done it, too. I've seen lots of dogs go mad, and the gentler they are the wilder they act when they go mad. You watch him now. He'll die in a minute or two. They always dies when you throw water on them. He got a good souse of it, too."

Indeed, Mr. Winterberry was quite soaked with liquid, but not with water. It was Cedarine. Mr. Dorgan walked up to the cage.

"Keep back there!" said the farmer, grasping him by the arm. "Just a scratch and you'll be a goner. He's a mad dog."

Mr. Dorgan backed away. He could hardly believe that Mr. Winterberry had taken his part so seriously as to go mad with the heat, but the fellow was certainly mad about something. Mr. Dorgan dived under the cage and peered under the side-wall of the tent. There seemed nothing by which anyone outside could have reached the top of the side-wall. When he crawled back, the crowd was still staring at Mr. Winterberry. They were greatly amused. Mr. Winterberry's blanket was quite saturated with liquid and he was finishing the removal of the liquid by wiping his neck and arms with a piece of rope. It was a stoutish piece of rope, about long enough to reach around Syrilla's waist. Mr. Dorgan went up to the bars of the cage and snapped his fingers.

"Here, Waw-Waw, good dog!" he said, and when Mr. Winterberry had put his head to the bars he whispered: "I don't know who has been doing this to you, Winterberry, but I'll get him after the show. I'll have Ching on the lookout from now on. It won't happen again." He turned away and spoke to Major Ching.

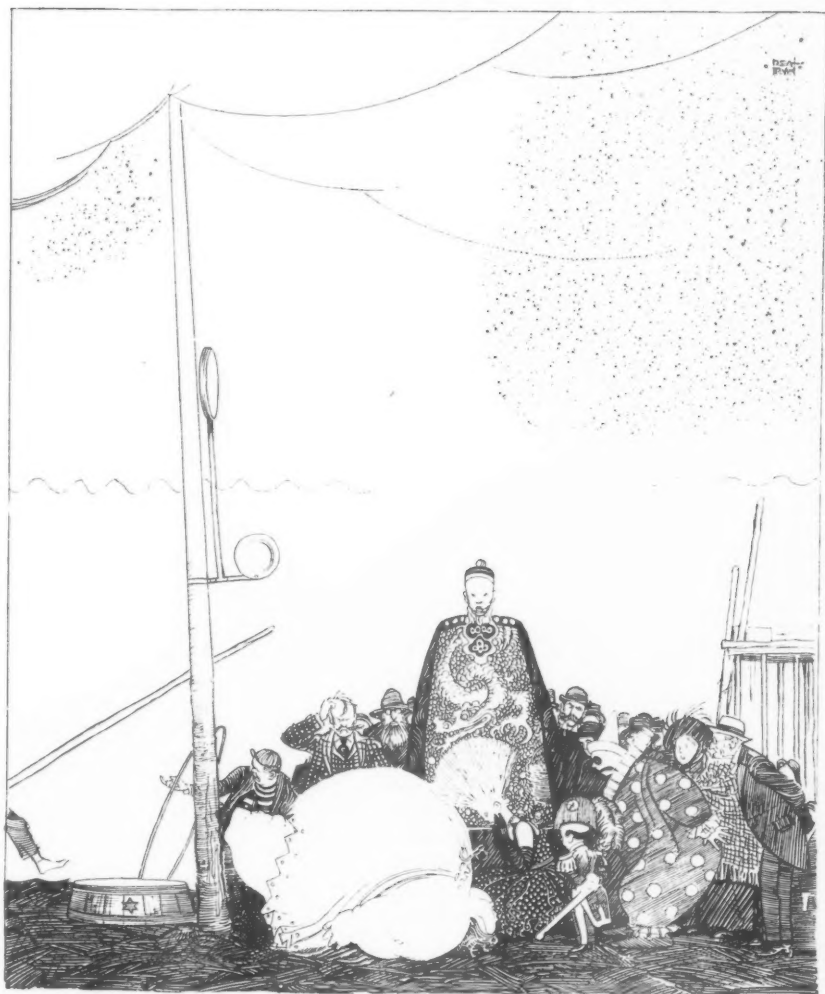
"Me watchee," said Major Ching, and arose and looked into the cage through its top.

"Any hair growing on him yet?" asked Mr. Lonergan when Major Ching had resumed his seat.

"No hair growee," said Major Ching.

"Well, I didn't expect it yet," said Mr. Lonergan. "The directions say three applications. We've only applied two."

Syrilla, at the far end of the row, arose.



With Mr. Lonergan's name on her lips, Syrilla toppled backward in a dead faint.

"Dearie," she said to Maggie, "they's some things a fond heart can stand, and they's some it can't, and to let poor Mr. Winterberry suffer with whatever's the matter with him and not say a cheerin' word is more than I'm capable of. I'm goin' to him."

Very carefully, and backward, she climbed down the stout steps that led down from her platform.

"Get back!" shouted Mr. Dorgan. "There's another crowd comin' in."

"Mind your own business, sweet-heart," Syrilla replied. "I knew when I smelled cedar instead of pine there was goin' to be sorer for some of us. If you knew how my poor heart is wrung you'd close your face, dearie."

She hobbled toward Mr. Winterberry's cage. At the same moment the crowd began to enter.

"Here!" said Mr. Dorgan roughly. "what are you doing with that tent stake?"

The woman addressed—a large woman with jet black hair—poked Mr. Dorgan in the stomach with the iron bound top of the stake, and he doubled up. Syrilla looked in that direction and caught the eye of the black haired woman. She hated her from that instant. Intuition told her to hate.

"Now!" whispered Mr. Lonergan, seeing all eyes turned on Mr. Dorgan and the large brunette, and he slipped four bottles of Cedarine into Major Ching's hand. The Giant extended his arm over the top of the cage and spilled the contents of the bottles on Mr. Winterberry's head.

Mr. Winterberry uttered a cry of rage, but it died in a gasp such as is given by a drowning man. He fell on his hands and knees and groped for the blanket. His hand touched something hard and cool. It was a bottle. Major Ching had dropped one of the four bottles in his haste. The shape of the bottle, the permeating odor of red cedar, and the lead-pencil taste of the liquid that almost strangled Mr. Winterberry told him that the liquid with which he was dripping was Cedarine, and his one thought was that the daughter of the maker of Cedarine had found him and was taking her revenge. To be drowned in hair tonic is an awful fate. Mr. Winterberry cried for mercy.

"Maria!" he cried in a loud voice. Agony, remorse and even a note of love mingled in the cry, and Syrilla, who had been about to speak a word of sympathy to Mr. Winterberry, drew back in horror.

"Charles Edward!" cried the dark haired woman, and stepping carelessly on Mr. Dorgan's stomach she sped across the tent, the tent stake firmly grasped in her hand. She was prepared to batter down the cage bars and inflict a terrible punishment on Mr. Winterberry, but when she reached the cage she hesitated. The tent stake fell slowly as she lowered her hand, and the glare of vengeance died in her eyes and was replaced by a glance of deep and joyous love. Charles Edward Winterberry sat with a bottle of Cedarine in his hand, rubbing the peerless hair tonic into his scalp with a dog blanket. She mistook Mr. Winterberry's attempt to rid himself of the

vile stuff to be evidence that he had become a convert to the virtues of Cedarine. His frantic efforts to wipe away the Cedarine she thought, and quite naturally, were the eager efforts of a repentant husband to apply Cedarine to his head. A great wave of love swept over her and with a deft twist of the tent stake she pried three bars from the front of the cage and, reaching inside, grasped Mr. Winterberry by the dog collar and jerked him to her bosom. Syrilla, all her love for Mr. Winterberry calling her to defend him against this woman, seized one of his feet and pulled. With his free foot Mr. Winterberry kicked feebly but in vain.

There can be no doubt that Syrilla, with her enormous preponderance of weight, would have eventually secured the larger portion of Mr. Winterberry when he finally broke in two, but he did not break in two. For a small man he seemed unusually tough, and while he stretched quite a little he did not break. The two women tugged at him in silent intensity, and it will always be an open question whether either would have given way before Mr. Winterberry gave way, had not Mr. Winterberry spoken.

"Dear wife," he said in a muffled but pleading voice, "please shift my head. There's a corset bone jabbing me in the eye."

"Wife!" cried Syrilla shrilly. "Wife?"

"Of course I'm his wife!" cried the black haired woman. "The little runaway snip! He ran away because I wanted to Cedarine his head for him."

"And you aint divorced?" quavered Syrilla.

"Never!" said Mrs. Winterberry.

Syrilla dropped Mr. Winterberry's foot as if it had suddenly become red hot. She turned her eyes upward, waved her hands aimlessly in the air like the flappers of a penguin.

"Lonergan!" she gasped, calling the name of the Living Skeleton, who, although neglected, she knew was still true. "Lonergan!"

With Mr. Lonergan's name on her lips Syrilla toppled backward in a dead faint. The confusion and excitement increased tenfold. The spectators, who had

paid a dime to see the freaks, crowded close. Princess Zozo screamed. Mr. Dorgan tried to boost Syrilla to a sitting position, and in the general confusion Mrs. Winterberry pushed Waw-Waw into the crowd and through it and out of it again at the tent entrance. Mr. Winterberry never returned.

When Mr. Dorgan had worked awhile over Syrilla she began to show signs of returning consciousness, but her listlessness frightened all. She made no effort to move. Indeed, she seemed unwilling to make the least effort to stir from where she lay. She said so.

"Let me die!" she moaned softly. "Let me lie here and die."

"Dearie, don't talk like that," said Maggie, kneeling by her.

"I want to die," said Syrilla. "Unless," she added, "Mr. Lonergan forgives me."

"Hey, Lonergan!" shouted Mr. Dorgan. "Lonergan! Come here! Get Lonergan, somebody. We can't leave this ton of lady here. She's interfering with the show. Where's Lonergan?"

There was no answer. Mr. Lonergan had disappeared.

"Any of you see my Living Skeleton?" Mr. Dorgan asked the crowd.

"Dearie," Syrilla whispered to Mag-

gie, "my heart is broke and I'll just lie here and die. I wish for nothing else but death. But goodness knows, a lady ought to be permitted to die comfortable. I'm lyin' right on top of a tent stake and it's most irritatin', dearie."

"Mr. Hoxie," said Maggie, "would you try to boost the poor dear over enough to get a tent stake out from under her?"

The Strong Man put his shoulder to the back of Syrilla's neck and pushed. Slowly he was able to raise her shoulders from the ground, and Mr. Dorgan, kneeling at her side, put his hand under her torso and grasped the annoying tent stake. But it was not a tent stake. He grasped the head of Mr. Lonergan. Using all his strength, he pulled Mr. Lonergan out from under Syrilla.

"What were you hiding there, like a coward, for?" asked Mr. Dorgan angrily. "Everybody looking for you, and you hiding!"

"Hiding? hiding?" said Mr. Lonergan. "I wasn't hiding. I caught her in my arms when she fell, and I was holding her in my lap."

"My darling!" said Syrilla, and absolutely without help she raised herself to a sitting posture. Such is the power of love!



The Brass Key

By Frederick R. Bechdolt

Author of "Lighthouse Tom," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY GRANT T. REYNARD

TO every big city police headquarters there come every day, day after day, the reports of missing persons. A line in the newspapers, unless the person be of more than passing importance, and the public forgets. But in many cities one finds an old-time policeman, much like Dolan in this story, who follows the trails through the city jungles, and, more often than not, turns up a clue. These men possess an almost uncanny faculty for their work, and of them all the San Franciscan from whom the Sergeant Dolan of this story is modeled is the greatest.

DETECTIVE SERGEANT DOLAN was going over the reports of missing persons.

He sat by the long table in the middle of the upper office, reading the typewritten slips. A gray-haired man with heavy face, he had that air of slow implacability which distinguishes the old police officer as plainly as a uniform. But, while his face was almost rectangular, suggesting a great singleness of purpose, there were keen lines between the brows, and the eyes were burdened with a wisdom gained by peering through the eyes of many men down into their souls. Reading the secrets which others had tried to hide beneath unmoved exteriors had brought Dolan bread and butter for years. It had kept him on the "Missing Persons" detail, out of whose routine great cases spring at intervals to startle the whole city with their mysteries.

About him many other large, well

barbered men were talking in the low tones of those to whom secrecy has become second nature. There was much putting on of overcoats. Locker doors slammed. One thrust a pair of gleaming handcuffs into his pocket. Another leaned across the counter trying to wring from a bewildered victim some description of the men who had robbed him the night before. Two debonair young giants were arguing over the identity of a photograph.

Gradually the crowd began to thin. The officers departed in pairs: the pawnshop detail, the pickpocket detail, the shrewd Irishmen who combed down the second-hand stores and hunted for petty larcenists, the two sleek young Titans whose business was to recognize faces from description and to bring the owners of those faces in for Bertillon measurement, finger-print records and the morning show-up.

In a few minutes the last of them

was gone forth on his day's work. Dolan sat, oblivious to their departure as he had been to their presence, and scanned the typewritten slips to see whether his day's work had anything worth while.

The slips lay in a shallow wire basket. He picked them out one by one, read each slowly and laid it aside.

Every one contained: the name of a missing person, the name of the man or woman who had reported the case, the description of the vanished one, and addresses and such other data as the officer receiving the report had been able to gather. They were stories of tragedy. When all else had failed, their relators had come here, weary from seeking, worn from futile theories, hopeless.

Dolan read them, scanning every item, giving it a certain value. As he read, each mystery which had tortured a layman became to him one of those plain incidents of every day, which may wreck hopes or mar lives but are too patent to merit police investigation.

The little things which untrained minds had failed to notice—a florid face, a sickness in past years, a word dropped in parting—sprang large before his eyes and gave him answers. He was so accustomed to searching for little things, so familiar with their real proportion in human affairs, that he did not have to think. His mind worked out these problems mechanically, like the mind of an accountant adding a figure column.

This man would be in the Hammam Baths—Dolan laid the report to one side. This one had fled from his creditors—Dolan's face was heavy with apathy. This woman—probably the Bay. He reached for the next slip, lighting his cigar at the same time. He puffed on placidly through three more cases. As he was looking at the fourth, the cigar tilted swiftly upward and Dolan's brows seemed to have grown heavier.

The report was in the usual form:

Name of missing party: Edward Hawkins.

Occupation: Jeweler.

Residence and place of business: The former in a district of flats and small rooming houses; the latter on a street devoted in the main to unimportant stores.

Reported by: Mrs. Tompkins, his landlady.

Remarks: Left lodgings last Monday evening between 8 and 8:30 in company of stranger who gave the name of Andrews. Said he was going to be gone an hour or so. Wore his smoking jacket. No word since. Place of business locked up.

This was Thursday morning. Dolan laid his cigar on the edge of the table while he copied the items into his vest pocket note-book. He wrote slowly and with the meticulous neatness of a man to whom small things are of grave importance. He signed his name to the slip and put it back into the wire basket with its fellows.

The captain of detectives hailed him as he was reporting out:

"They want to see you in the district attorney's office about the evidence in that Wilson shooting."

"They'll have to wait," Dolan was buttoning his overcoat. "I got a new case."

"Anything good?" the captain of detectives asked nonchalantly.

"Disappearance. It don't look right." Dolan picked up his umbrella and started out. Over his shoulder he said, "Man in business—left the house in his smoking jacket Monday evening with a stranger and aint showed up yet. I'll take a look into it."

As he was leaving the Hall of Justice a reporter hailed him: "Anything stirring?"

Dolan shook his head: "Not a thing." He paused. "Is it right that Johnny Clancy's going to run on the good government ticket?" His face had taken on some animation.

"Sure. He gave it out himself yesterday." The reporter went on with details. Dolan listened, deeply interested. He shook his head over the mutability of ward politics, and started on.

He walked down Kearney Street, big chested, heavily neat, from his gleaming shoes to the crown of his black derby hat. His rectangular face was apathetic: it would have been like a face of wood, if it had not been for the lines between the brows and the wisdom in the eyes. They gave to it implacability and a stern

air of power. He puffed contentedly on his cigar and nodded to many acquaintances—a judge of the superior court, a Greek pawnbroker, a politician, a petty thief, a wealthy banker. He greeted each one according to that one's place in his esteem—or the routine of his work.

He reached the crossing of an avenue where electric cars came clanging one after another. He boarded one and rode out toward the address where Edward Hawkins had lodged.

The house was at the end of the "twenty-two-hundred" block. Dolan left the car at the beginning of the block. He walked the square's length at a slower pace than he had taken on Kearney Street. It was as if he had gone back to the days when he had worn "the harness," and was patrolling a beat with the old leisurely swagger.

His face was more wooden than ever—save for the eyes. They had laid aside the burden of their wisdom. They were hawk-like, moving as if they did not belong to the other features.

The neighborhood was like a hundred others in the city. On either side, a row of double houses lined the street. Every one of them had its own flight of stairs and its bay window. All of them gave a general monotonous impression of sameness. Yet by the time he had reached the one which bore the number in his note-book, Dolan's eyes had noted which dwellings were occupied, which were vacant, which bore signs announcing "Rooms to Rent" and a dozen other details. The eyes had passed these little things on to be recorded. A mere mechanical filing away of data, to be kept in case it might be called for, and otherwise to be ignored. It was habit with Dolan.

He rang the bell and a woman answered. She was spare of figure; her face was worn; her eyes were faded. She had that general air which suggests "Rooms to Rent," shabby stair carpets and the mildew-ish odor of a dusky hallway.

"Mrs. Tompkins," Dolan asserted.

He loomed before her, unemotionally aggressive. The presence of huge, implacable power made him seem gigantic;

and when she looked up at his square face it was as if she heard the jingling of fetters.

She bowed. The lines of worry deepened on her face. She opened the door wider to admit him as he announced himself.

As he entered the little hallway, Dolan eliminated one possibility in the case. There was no aching heart behind this report—unless Edward Hawkins were behind with his rent.

"I wouldn't 've had it happen for the world," she told him as she led him into a dim sitting-room. "In these hard times—and it's so easy to give a house a bad name!"

Dolan seated himself upon a chair with faded plush upholstery; he placed his derby hat on the floor beside him, nodding gravely.

He recognized the source of the anxiety in her pale eyes. He ticked her off from any list of probable suspects. He had interviewed hundreds of her kind, and she rang true to the type. He pulled the little note-book from his pocket.

She fluttered to the door and closed it. "The other roomers," she explained. He nodded again.

"He was a single man. I take it, lady?"

"Yes, sir—a bachelor. He's roomed here for ten years." Now that she was launched, she went on easily. He followed her, taking an occasional note from the stream of words. "As regular as a clock, ever since I knew him, and never made trouble in any way, and always prompt with his room-rent. He never went out of nights and he never kept bad company—that I know of; and when this man Andrews came for him Monday evening and Mr. Hawkins said he was going away, it seemed all right to me, though he never did go away like that, you see. But when he didn't come back that evening or the next morning, of course I worried. So I went to the store and it was locked up and—"

"No clerk?" Dolan interrupted. She shook her head.

"Just a little store. You must 've seen it. He's been in business in that same place on Fillmore Street ever since I knew him first, and was there before. So,

when he didn't come back on the next day after that, I telephoned and told the police. It was last night. I do hope—" She faltered. "He's been a good roomer and regular; and the name of the house if anything did happen! I always—"

"Now this party, Andrews," Dolan interrupted heavily. "When did you first see or hear of *him*?"

"He came here one evening nearly two months ago and asked for Mr. Hawkins. And after that, twice or maybe three times; but I never heard his name until Monday night, when they were going out and Mr. Hawkins stopped to introduce us; but Mr. An-

face wore a look of great relief.

"It's all right after all." She handed Dolan the yellow slip. "I'm so glad. If I'd only known, I'd not 've telephoned. There never was an officer in my house before."

Dolan ignored her evident dislike for department investigations. He was reading the telegram. It was dated that morning in Sacramento.

Gone East for three weeks. Ansel Andrews will handle business.
Edward Hawkins.

Dolan's brows assumed that same increase of weight which they had taken



"Where is Hawkins?"
The three words came
like the clang of jail
doors.

drews went right on and said something to Mr. Hawkins, and *he* said, 'I'll be back in the hour.' So we didn't talk together, and I can't say what Andrews was like, only—"

Dolan halted her again and took down what points of description she was able to give.

"A quiet man, I will say that, and he seemed well behaved and all—as far as I ever saw him; and he wasn't anyways bad looking."

A ring at the doorbell caused her to arise. Dolan waited while she went to answer it. She was back in a few moments, holding a telegram. Her faded

on when he first read that report in the upper office. His eyes were harder, for the moment.

"I'm sorry I had to bother you." Mrs. Tompkins was on her feet now, facing the door. Placidity was returning, marred only by his presence. The implacable power of the law no longer impressed her. Dolan was unnecessary, unwelcome.

He was reading the telegram a second time. He looked up and he tucked it into his pocket.

"I'll have to keep this." There was a quiet sternness in his voice. "Did this party, Hawkins, have any relations?"

"None." There was impatience in her tone. But he had handled too many cases from furnished rooms to notice that. His mind had no direct concern with her.

"Did he have any lawyer?" Dolan went on evenly. She shook her head.

"Not that I know of."

"Ever go to Sacramento before?" She shook her head again.

"I want to see his room now." He rose and started toward the door.

"But the telegram?" She stood her ground in front of him. "Surely it's all right now. And the other roomers—"

"I got to see the room first, lady." Dolan's face remained impassive.

She preceded him up the stairs. It was a front room, small but well lighted.

"Economical man, I take it." Dolan did not wait for an answer but walked about the apartment, his eyes moving in quick contrast to the rest of his countenance.

He opened a closet door. "These clothes? Wore them every day?"

"Yes. He wore his other suit away with him. These were the regular ones."

Dolan explored the pockets. When he came to the trousers, he produced a bunch of keys. He studied them for a moment. His face assumed a look of heavy satisfaction as he put them back again.

"Now I tell you, lady,"—he faced Mrs. Tompkins—"everything looks all right. But you do what I say, or maybe it will ball things up so I'd have to come around again."

"Yes, sir." Mrs. Tompkins listened intently. Her face became less hostile. "It would be better if you didn't have to come."

"It's like this," Dolan went on evenly: "when this party Andrews comes, you let him have anything belonging to Mr. Hawkins that he asks for, and just say nothing about reporting the matter to us. Understand? It saves trouble all round, and I don't have to come back then and hurt the reputation of the house. Don't tell him I was here. That keeps everything quiet and peaceful."

"Oh yes. You think it's all right then." She sighed with relief.

"It looks so." He smiled, going down

the stairs ahead of her. His face was heavily complacent; but his eyes were hard, like the eyes of a man hunting big game in a forest.

The jewelry store of Edward Hawkins was half a mile away, but Dolan walked with that slow, thoughtful swagger. "I'll take a look at the place and see Mr. Andrews anyhow," he muttered once.

A small store; Dolan was able to see the watchmender's table near the front window, the safe, and the show-case with its array of time-pieces and jeweled ornaments. The door was locked and bore no card announcing temporary closing. The place was deserted. He did not linger before it but retraced his steps to the corner and entered a cigar stand.

Here he remained, to all appearance paying no heed to things about him but loafing with the assiduity of an old policeman.

Once he pulled out his watch; then he took a railroad time-table from his breast pocket and consulted it for the arrival of trains from Sacramento.

The hours dragged by. Dolan regarded the street with the same amount of enthusiasm on his face that the wooden Indian in front of the cigar stand showed on his. But he noted every passenger alighting from the cars on the cross street which led past the rooming house of Mrs. Tompkins, and he noted every person passing the little jewelry store.

Save for one or two acquaintances, no one noticed Dolan. He hailed these men with unusual warmth; he held them in conversation. It made the time pass more swiftly—and it made him less conspicuous to strangers.

Noontime went by; the afternoon wore on; evening was drawing near. An electric car slowed up at the crossing. Before it had come to a stop a man alighted.

Dolan's eyes flitted to this passenger and Dolan turned to the cigar counter. During that fraction of a second he had recognized the spare figure in the neat blue suit. But, had the landlady's description been lacking, the nervous manner in which this stranger looked about him would have been enough.



He studied the keys for a moment. His face assumed a look of heavy satisfaction.

Passing the stand he looked sharply at Dolan but saw only the square back of a customer who was engrossed in picking out a cigar.

Dolan lingered, making his purchase, and, when he had selected it, took some time in lighting it. After that he unbuttoned his overcoat, pulled out his watch and gazed dully at the time-piece. He stepped out to the sidewalk. The interval had not been long enough to allow a man to walk the block's length, but the spare figure in blue was not in sight. The face of the wooden Indian was animated in comparison to the face of Dolan as he walked slowly to the jewelry store. He opened the door and he entered.

A figure rose from behind the counter near the window. As the head and shoulders emerged, Dolan gazed apathetically at a thin, pallid face, into a pair of round eyes as coldly inanimate as the eyes of a china doll.

"Mr. Andrews," Dolan asserted.

The eyes remained immobile, as expressionless as two round stones, so steady that it seemed as if their owner must be using effort to keep them open. They were almost uncanny in that cold stare.

"I'm an officer," Dolan's face set itself into right angles.

Suddenly the eyes changed. There was a spasm of the lids, an involuntary swift fluttering as if Dolan's words had unchained something stronger than the will that held those lids in leash.

The man was standing near the safe. Its door was open. The keys, which had been in the pocket of Edward Hawkins' everyday clothes, were hanging in their ring from one of their number which was in the lock of an inner strong-box.

Dolan's face assumed a vast solidity; he stood silent; his body seemed to swell. Implacability enwrapped him. He was like the embodiment of steel bars, stone walls and gleaming handcuffs, as he waited for the first words in response to his announcement.

"All right," The voice of Andrews was cheerful, almost deferential. "What can I do for you?" His eyes were again like the eyes of a china doll.

"Where is Hawkins?" The three

words came like the clang of jail doors.

"On his way East," Andrews answered coldly.

"Going to sit tight," Dolan thought.

His manner retained its uncompromising weight as he went on asking questions. Andrews replied to every one, and stopped at that.

He had known Hawkins for two months or more. They had gone to Sacramento together. Hawkins had some business there, whose nature Andrews did not know. Hawkins had made up his mind to go while they were taking a walk together. He himself had made the trip for pleasure. His time was his own. Hence he had agreed to tend store, when that business called his companion on East. The combination of the safe? He showed it as he had, he said, written it on a slip of paper that morning at Hawkins' dictation. There was no atom of discrepancy with the known facts.

"He went to Sacramento in his smoking jacket?" Dolan's voice was like an indictment.

Again the eyelids fluttered. The spasm ceased. "Yes." The voice of Andrews was emotionless.

Dolan walked slowly around the counter. "I want you to come with me," he announced abruptly.

"Do you arrest me?" The outrage in his voice was the first feeling Andrews had betrayed.

"I'm going to hold you for a while—until I investigate." Dolan stepped behind the other and felt along the outside of his pockets for a weapon. There was none.

"You're searching me?" The voice rang with protest.

Dolan shook his head. "I'll search you later," he said slowly.

The words released these eyelids for the third time. Andrews did not move another muscle; the eyes themselves did not change their expression. But the lids fluttered for an instant as they had before.

Dolan closed the safe door. He let Andrews walk ahead of him around the counter. The man had thrust his right hand into his pocket.

In front of the counter, Andrews paused to protest again; and as he spoke

he withdrew the hand, laying his arm on the show-case.

They started on once more. And Dolan reached to the place where the arm had rested on the glass. He picked up an object.

It was a large brass door-key, one of the cumbersome, old-fashioned keys which are still common in those residence districts untouched by the great fire. Dolan held it out.

"Where did you get this?" he asked quietly.

Andrews looked at the key.

"I never saw it before," he said.

"Come on." Dolan uttered the words like a judge delivering sentence.

Down Fillmore Street to the car line; down the car line to Kearney Street; up Kearney Street to the grim gray Hall of Justice, Dolan kept ceaseless watch of his prisoner. But Dolan's eyes found no little thing now to pass on and file away for future reference. Not even when they took the elevator which carried them up to the city prison, not even when the huge blue-clad officer unlocked the door admitting them from the cage into the office of the desk sergeant and jailer, nor yet when they searched Andrews and entered his name in the great book, did the man make any comment or allow his face to change.

"The wisest murderer I ever handled," Dolan told the captain of detectives.

The captain of detectives shook his head. "You've got no case. These aren't the old days, Dolan. No 'small book' now. If you could hold him for a week, you might find something. But you've got to charge him to-morrow afternoon. And who's going to swear to a complaint when we can't even show that this fellow Hawkins is dead?"

"He's the murderer." Dolan's face was stolid.

"He tells a good tight story." The captain of detectives smiled.

"I'm going to have a talk with him to-night. Let him soak awhile; and I'm going out to get a bite to eat. I'll be on hand by nine o'clock, if you'll help me sweat him." Dolan's voice was monotonous.

He was back in the upper office at nine o'clock; and, after he had gone

over all the details of the case with the captain of detectives, he brought Andrews down from the city prison.

For three hours the two gray ferrets examined the suspect after the method of the new school in police work, which allows no harassment beyond a duel of wits between officers and prisoner. Four men in a large, dimly lighted room surrounded by silent corridors and empty offices. Two shooting questions at the third, while a silent stenographer in department blue sat taking down every word that was spoken. The only sounds were the questions—sometimes abrupt, sometimes dragging, always crashing like steel doors—and the answers,—always in the same cold, dispassionate voice,—and the scraping of the stenographer's pencil.

At last Dolan took Andrews back through the silent corridor to the city prison.

"Want to hear the notes?" The captain of detectives asked when Dolan returned.

"I know." Dolan shook his head. "Sits tight, don't he?" His face betrayed a flicker of admiration. It became heavier again. "I'll work on it awhile before I go home."

He sat alone in the office for a long time; and later he went to the jewelry store on Fillmore Street. He looked into the lightless window; he walked up the block and down again. He went to the rooming house of Mrs. Tompkins and paced up and down that street. It was long past midnight when he sought his home. His fingers clutched that old-fashioned brass door key. His thoughts centered upon that same object.

"Your man's yelling for a lawyer," the lieutenant in charge of the city prison told Dolan the next morning.

"Humph," Dolan nodded, "he don't intend to run any chances on staying here, does he? Did he sleep well?"

The jailer nodded. Dolan sighed.

"Sometimes I wish we were back in the old days, when we buried 'em alive for two weeks if we had to, and got the evidence. We don't get a good show now. Don't let anybody see him, Tom, until his twenty-four hours is up."

"I understand," said the captain of detectives in his office a few minutes later, "that this fellow Andrews is beginning to holler for his rights."

"Wise bird," Dolan agreed. "He figures we aint got anything on him; and he can force us into turning him loose this afternoon. Then he'll blow—and chances are, he'll take everything that aint nailed down in that store, too."

"Well, I don't see how we're going to stop him. Find anything new?"

Dolan shook his head. "I'd like to take a chance on him and hold him a day or two anyhow."

"I'd like to let you. But we're in bad enough already, without running risk of a new suit for false imprisonment. No, Dolan, you got to charge him before five o'clock this afternoon, or else let him go."

"I'll take him out for an airing after a while," Dolan said quietly. His eyes were reddened from lack of sleep.

He reported out; and as he was leaving the Hall of Justice, the reporter in the entrance hailed him.

"Nothing stirring," Dolan said over his shoulder.

"That man in detainue—" called the reporter. Dolan shook his head.

"I don't know yet what he amounts to," He went on, ignoring the question which the other called.

He took a car to the rooming house of Mrs. Tompkins. He closeted himself with the worn-faced landlady and worried her with more questions. He walked up the street, and found nothing there which his eyes had omitted observing yesterday. He visited the jewelry store again. He went to the lodgings of the prisoner. He examined every article in the room. His eyes were tireless in their quest for little things.

Several times he took the old brass key from his pocket and gazed heavily upon it. He had found no lock that it would fit.

Morning was well along before Dolan was back at the city prison. He went to the cell which had been assigned to his prisoner—one of a small block of cells, separated from the other tiers. Andrews was lying on his bunk.

"We'll take a walk," said Dolan.

Andrews rose from the bunk and started to put on his coat. His face was unchanged, and the eyes were as ever, like the eyes of a china doll.

Andrews went out with Dolan in silence. They left the Hall of Justice by the rear entrance, where the patrol wagons come, and the officers on their way to the central station. There was no danger of encountering reporters here, and Dolan remembered this morning's importunate queries in the main doorway.

First Dolan took his man to the room which Hawkins had occupied. There the two traveled over the story of that trip to Sacramento. There was no discrepancy. Dolan's eyes saw no sign of any emotion.

They went to the jewelry store on Fillmore Street. Dolan asked more questions. The tale was repeated.

They rode out to Andrews' room. Again Dolan examined his prisoner, and neither heard nor saw a new thing.

They walked over adjacent streets and into further streets. Dolan's features seemed to grow heavier, his face more like a rectangle, as the hours went by. At times he lagged imperceptibly, to allow his companion to choose his own route. But Andrews never assumed the initiative; he waited for Dolan to do the piloting.

It was nearly two o'clock. They started back toward the downtown section. They reached a street leading to the ferry building. Cable cars traversed it. Dolan stopped at the corner and looked back. A car was coming toward them, but they were on the left hand side.

Dolan started across the street in order to catch the car. Andrews followed a step or two behind. Dolan walked swiftly, for the car was near. Andrews was lagging perceptibly.

As he reached the curb, Dolan looked over his shoulder. "Come on," he said sharply.

He saw Andrews' eyelids flutter suddenly, covering the round eyes for a fraction of a second.

The car was clanging toward the corner. The two men boarded it and rode down to Kearney Street.



The two traveled over the story of the trip to Sacramento. There was no discrepancy.

When he had seen the jail doors shut on his prisoner, Dolan went back to the upper office. The captain of detectives had left word for him. When he entered the captain's room, he saw an evening paper on the large polished desk. The captain of detectives pointed at the first page. Dolan beheld, emblazoned in large type, the announcement that he had arrested a suspect in a murder case; and he read the name of Ansel Andrews.

"And Tyler has called up the jail twice to see him," said the captain of detectives heavily.

Tyler was a lawyer, who had slipped more than one big criminal to freedom, and had handled several suits against the department.

Dolan stood silent, gazing at the printed sheet. He raised his head; there was something in the movement which suggested a bull.

"I got till five o'clock yet," he said quietly, and left the room.

In the outer office he encountered the two sleek young Titans who made a business of recognizing faces. He button-holed them, then took them to the city prison; the three men gazed through the cell bars at Andrews.

"Can't make him," said the two at once when they were back in the desk sergeant's office.

"Take a look through the gallery," Dolan suggested.

But the identification department had nothing in the way of pictures to help them.

Dolan went again to the upper office. He sat there for nearly a half hour with the brass key before him, staring at it as if he would read some secret there. He rose at last, and left the room in silence. He barely nodded to acquaintances as he walked down Kearney Street. He rode out on an electric car and he walked over the ground which he and Andrews had traveled that morning.

It was like an idle procedure. But there remained nothing else. Block after block and street after street; and at last Dolan turned down the thoroughfare which the cable cars traversed toward the ferry building.

At the corner where he had halted with his prisoner before crossing the street to catch their car, he paused. The walk was over; the last block lay behind him. And there had been nothing. He pulled out his watch. It lacked less than ten minutes of five o'clock. He put the watch back into his pocket.

He stood stock still, thinking.

A cable car was coming down the street. He looked up and saw it. His eyes went across the street; he saw the curb where he had stopped and had spoken the two words which had brought that flutter to Andrews' eyelids.

Dolan raised his head a little further and his hand went into his trousers pocket. He started across the street. He reached the curb; he went straight on; he climbed the steps of the house on the corner; and his hand came forth from his pocket, clutching the big, old-fashioned brass door-key.

He stopped before the door; he fitted the key into the lock; and then he turned it.

The house was dim. Dolan entered the front room; he passed into the next apartment, a vacant back sitting-room; and as he pulled aside the shade he saw the body of Edward Hawkins lying in the middle of the floor, the skull crushed.

It was just five o'clock when Dolan got the city prison over the telephone from a near-by house.

"That man Andrews in detainue—" he said placidly. "Charge him for me. First degree murder."

The captain of detectives found him an hour later immersed in his quest for corroborative evidence.

"The best case you ever handled." The captain of detectives put his hand on Dolan's shoulder. "How did you find that body?"

Dolan looked up from the paper which he was studying. "Hanged if I know. Just a hunch." He turned his eyes on the paper again.

"Now this safe combination: chances are he wrote it down after watching Hawkins open the door a good many times." He nodded to himself, and his eyes scanned the bit of paper.

LILY

By Walter Jones

Author of "The 'Younger Set' in Pembina," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY
WILLIAM VAN DRESSER

THIS is a Walter Jones story entirely different from any he has ever written, but it has that same grasp of human nature which made his "Pembina" stories the short story surprise of the last year

HE was very young and very lonely and there was something about the girl's frail blonde tawdriness that was not quite common; so, when she asked him to pass the pepper—the Rawlings House supplied one antique castor to a table—he leaned across the cloth and spoke to her: "Aren't you Miss Davidge, the artist that sang at the Palace last night?"

She stopped buttering a slice of limp toast and met the gaze of his frank blue eyes a full second; then a sardonic smile flitted across her somber young face and she replied: "Thanks, I'm not an artist; but I did oblige between the pictures."

"Staying out the week at the Palace?"

"Yes."

"I think your turn's fine—the best they've had over there this season."

"Is that so?" A sudden bright spot of red mounted into either pale cheek.



She declared wistfully that his mother must be the sweetest woman in the world.

Van Dresser

She leveled a scornful glance upon him. "And don't you think, also, that I'm a cute little trick—and what kind of chocolate creams do I like—and wouldn't I care to take a stroll after the show to-night?"

The boy flushed scarlet, gulped his coffee, and mumbled a retreat; but into her eyes came only a look of relief. With a jangle of cheap jewelry, she put out a detaining hand. "Don't go. Heaven knows I am glad enough of anyone I dare to talk to! I thought you weren't—that kind, but you see I wanted to make sure."

He hesitated. But he was very lonely and her frankness reassured him; so,

still blushing, and crumbling a piece of bread embarrassedly, he burst out: "I meant that about your act. It was refined and you didn't pull any of the cheap comedy stuff."

"I'm glad you liked me," she said gratefully; yet, in the next breath she repudiated his praise: "I guess the Palace must have been showing *dumb* acts. If you want to know what I think, I think my turn's pretty rotten; my wardrobe's run down and I'm using only second-string songs. I can't afford to pay the music publishers for exclusive numbers, and of course they won't pay me for singing 'em over this cyclone circuit."

He looked at her sympathetically. She was white-faced, and tired, and sad—not at all the bright butterfly that had fluttered above the footlights the evening before. Maybe she was lonely too. But he didn't know what a "dumb" act was, and he had never heard of "exclusive" numbers; so he could only try again rather blindly: "It must be great to be an actress, and have people applaud you every night, and travel around everywhere."

She shook her head. "They don't applaud you every night, and all towns look alike to me. Sometimes, on a split week, I don't even remember the name of the one I'm playing."

"I've always thought I'd like stage life a lot. But I suppose," he sighed, "even kings get tired of purple."

There was a letter beside her plate and he colored when she caught his glance fastened wistfully upon it. "I presume you're wondering if it's a contract from Morris or David Belasco?"

"No, no," he stammered, "I was just—that is—if it's from *him* or home, I'm envying you. Mine's a week overdue—from home."

She took up the envelope and flipped it slowly back and forth between her fingers. "No, there isn't any *him* and I haven't any home. It's from the woman that's been keeping my dog in Chicago. She says he got the distemper, and it went to his eyes, and they've had to shoot him. Poor Dodo!" She bent her head. "He was the only friend I had in the world, the only living creature that cared. It came yesterday afternoon, this note. That's why I worked so listless last

night. But they didn't seem to notice. 'Most anything goes out here, I guess.'

"You're right. 'Most anything goes,'" he repeated bitterly.

As he went on with a pretence of eating, he was conscious of her tense scrutiny, which took in his neatly trimmed hair, and hand-bowed tie, and the society pin on his gray flannel shirt. "You don't belong to this—this Midas dump?" she flashed.

"No, New Hampshire"—the name welled up to his lips with a homesick tremor—"is my state. I'm assistant engineer out here on the dam for the irrigation project."

"Oh," she began, "that must be interesting!"

And then the waitress, who had been hovering near, gave an ominous cough and proceeded to clear away their dishes. They were done eating. There was no excuse for remaining longer in the dining-room. The boy got up and went over to get his cap from the rack that ran along the wall. He stood an instant, biting his lip, then came back to her, flushed but determined: "Miss Davidge, I'm not very busy to-day. A shipment of concrete's holding us up. If you'd like to, this afternoon I could take my rig and show you around the works. And there's a road up the mountain has a view worth driving to."

She was so long in answering that he thought she was going to decline; but her assent came finally with a rush of pleasure and, he fancied, a trace of tears. "Why, yes, I'd love to! I don't believe I've been in a 'rig' since I was a kid. But I'll be interfering with your work, won't I?"

"Not a bit. And you haven't any other engagement?" he made sure.

"No," she laughed, "except to sit in my room, and mend stockings, and cry over Dodo."

At two o'clock he called for her and they drove down the deep lowland toward the cut where the valley narrowed into the dam. He explained the project and showed her the construction camp, the big cranes, and the toy railroad; then they climbed upon the masonry of the dam and looked out over the sun-baked plains its waters were to freshen.

She turned to him with a voice that was small with awe: "And you came out here all the way from New Hampshire to build this?"

"No," he laughed, a little bitterly. "I'm scarcely more than a foreman. It's Stannard and Trask, and the men-in-the-jeans, that are really building it. What do you say?—let's go on up the mountain. We can get a better view from there."

As they curved up the winding road, she looked back upon Midas, straggling its meager chimneys disconsolately against the hillside. "How long have you been here?" she asked.

"Ten months and four days," he answered mechanically; every night he put another check on the little calendar beside his humpy bed in the Rawlings House.

"I'll bet it seems ten years!"

"A hundred, sometimes! But I've sixteen months still to stay."

"Don't you get terribly lonely?"

"Don't I! Say!" He shrugged his big shoulders and clucked to his horse, "G'lang, Omar."

"What do you do—them times?" she asked gently.

"Oh, start off on a tramp with my gun, or go up to Jake's dance-hall for an evening, or—once when Traskie and I got into a blue funk, we hiked back to a claim-house in the woods and went on a regular spree. Disgraceful, wasn't it?" He laughed harshly.

"I haven't any right to say. I've done pretty near the same myself." She put her hand impulsively on his arm. "But you went again, will you? Your folks back there in New Hampshire—"

His folks back there in New Hampshire! It was a chord that had vibrated poignantly all day. "No, I'll not do it again. It's a cheap trick. But I guess it's of a piece with the bally young fool I've been all my life." Under the silent sympathy of her troubled brows, the whole burden of his banishment burst from him. "You see, I was born and brought up on the edge of one of those quiet little cities back there in New Hampshire. I guess I was a spoiled son, all right. But I always had a liking for figures and mechanics, and when I finished the high

school, I decided I wanted to be an engineer, so they sent me down to the Boston Tech. And the big city proved too much for little Luther Van Dorn. I wasn't really bad; but I got in with a crowd that played poker, and went to shows and neglected their work. And then—the girl I wanted—the folks didn't believe she could be a lady because she was in the chorus. My sister kicked up such an awful row that one day Father walked in, and yanked me out of school, and shipped me on here—he had to use a lot of 'influence' to pull down the job—till I'd have time to think things over, and give up Irma, and decide I'd be a good boy."

"I'll bet you used to have some swell times in that Tech." She sat looking thoughtfully into her lap. "It's pretty hard out here, isn't it? But it'll show your folks how much they miss you. And your friend—perhaps, if they find she's waited—"

"She doesn't write often now." He bit his lip. "I guess she thinks I didn't use her square. And there're always a lot of men flocking after Irma. But maybe it's just as well. Maybe I won't go back at all. In lots of ways a fellow's freer out here—and I'd like to go on to the Coast and the Yukon."

She shook her head with decision. "Oh yes, you will go back; you must go back. You're *class*, and there isn't any class out here. Maybe, when you've got your degree, you'll come out again on a job sometimes, but you'll always go back. Tell me," she asked, with sudden wistfulness, "about your folks and your home. You've got an awfully nice home, haven't you?"

"I sure have." He looked at her perplexedly. "But what is there to tell? It's just like everybody else's."

"Is it? I know somebody that's never had any home but a second-rate hotel or a hall bedroom."

He flushed apologetically. "Well, let's see—" His eyes half closed; his mouth curved into a boyishly reminiscent smile, and the reins hung slack through his fingers. "It's a big white house, way back from the road, with gables, and a lot of sheds that run clear through to the stables. There's a pine grove on one

side and in the rear the lawn slopes down to a little pond. When I was a kid, we used to have a croquet-ground; and afterwards a tennis-court and a canoe. But I can't tell you"—he broke off—"anything like it really is."

"Oh, yes, you *have*," she put in quickly. "And I've seen just such grand places from the train, and spent the whole afternoon wondering about 'em; but I've never met anybody before that lived in one. And now, if you don't think I'm too dreadfully rude—"

"You couldn't be rude if you tried," he assured her shyly.

"—tell me about your sister that objected to Irma. Is she pretty?"

"Alice? Not exactly handsome, but she's very stunning."

"Alice?" She repeated the name softly. "Alice Van Dorn—that's a very aristocratic name."

He chuckled. "Well, *aristocratic* suits Alice all right."

"I suppose she is in society," she suggested.

Again he regarded her perplexedly. "I don't know what you mean. Isn't everybody in—some society?"

"No," she said dryly, "some people are lucky to be out of jail. But I meant, doesn't she wear Paris dresses, and go to balls, and have admirers?"

"Yes."

"And get her picture in the 'Society section' of the Sunday papers?"

"I believe she did once," he recollected amusedly, "in a Boston paper—'Young New Hampshire belle, visiting in the Back Bay,' or something like that. But Mother never puts on much style; I guess she's just plain folks. I s'pose," he added, with awkward sympathy, "from what you said about your dog, that your home's broken up?"

"Broken up? I never had any. I was born in a boarding-house and brought up in 'furnished rooms,' dozens of 'em all over the city. Every couple of months we used to pack up our things and flit before rent day. I never went to school much, or got acquainted with anybody, because we never stayed long enough in a place. And then,"—she paused and turned her face away from him—"when I was fifteen, I found out my mother

was—what she was; and she went her way—till she died, and I went mine. That was along when Klaw and Erlanger were putting on their big spectacles. I lied about my age, and got a job in the ballet. And ever since, the only address I've had's been a route-sheet."

"That's tough." Flecking his whip against the wheel, he said solemnly: "I guess life's thrown both of us up against the bricks a bit, you and me. Do you know,"—in a confidential burst—"I was pretty near in a blue funk this morning. To-night's initiation night in my society and the fellows sent me a card; things haven't been going well at the camp, either; and then, my letter from Mother not coming—"

"The same here," she confessed. "That note about Dodo put me up in the air; and I got word the agents'd canceled my time in Missoula."

"A couple of glooms! But now"—he brightened—"we'll cheer each other up the rest of the week, wont we, pal-ess?"

She answered that she'd try to do her part, but he thought that her voice shook. He turned to her concernedly. "Why, Miss Davidge, you're shivering! You'd ought to have dressed warmer. It's dangerous if you catch cold out here."

"I'm not cold," she protested; "and we're almost back to town."

But he took off his coat and put it around her shoulders. "There," he commanded, "you'd ought to take better care of yourself. You'll ruin your voice."

"I guess nothing'd ruin *my* voice. I've had an awfully pleasant afternoon," she thanked him, as they drew up before the hotel.

"We never looked at the view," he chuckled. "Say," he added impulsively. "I wish I could take you out on Broadway to dinner to-night. It'd be one big night: two prodigals returned and nothing too good for 'em."

"Thanks, I accept your invitation! But I guess it's stewed prunes and the Rawlings House for us."

"I've got some fruit cake of Mother's in my room. We could eat it out on the porch."

"Good?" she cried. "And I'll scotch some cocoa and sugar and stir up a pan of fudge on the gas jet. We'll make it a



It seemed an eternity before she came back, and rested her hand on his shoulder, and said gently, "Luther."

big night in Midas. I'll wear my red soubrette dress and do my Spanish dance to 'La Paloma' for you—that is, if you happened to be coming into the show to-night."

"I sure am," he said, as he left her at the ladies' entrance to put away his horse. "I'm coming in every night."

It was cold on the second-story veranda of the Rawlings House; but there was nowhere else to go, so he brought out a couple of sweaters and they ate their little spread on the landing of the fire-escape. Across the street, the lights of the Palace winked not uncozily.

The soubrette dress was a "peach"

and Miss Davidge's fandango made a hit that was long remembered in Midas. Luther Van Dorn led the applause of the camp boys till his palms smarted; and when the show was over, he left her in the lobby, with the eager reminder, "Remember, pal-ess, to-morrow's Wednesday and we're going to have a regular look at that view."

"No," she objected, conscientiously, "I sha'n't take you away from your work again."

"Well, anyway," he insisted, "I'll come up early and if you—happen to be around, we'll have a little talk before supper."

She did "happen to be around," and they went up to the stuffy little parlor that was never used, on the second floor, and sat decorously on stiff yellow plush chairs while she told him interesting "bits" from her life "on the road," and he came back with the "doings" of his "bunch" at Tech.

That was Wednesday.

Thursday she brought out a roll of music and they tried her pieces over on the tin-panny piano, his big baritone soaring freshly above her thin soprano. Also he gravitated from his yellow plush chair to the side of her music-stool and as naturally slipped from "pal-ess" into "Lily."

On Friday he showed her the pictures of his family; and she declared wistfully that his mother must be the sweetest woman in the world, and admiringly that Alice looked dashing enough to grace the society page of any paper. In return, she had nothing to show him but a tiny snapshot of Dodo, whom he pronounced "some dog!"—just the kind a fellow'd want to own."

Saturday morning the boy woke up and checked off the little calendar by his bedside with a dismayed start. It was her last day! "To-night," he said to her, "if you aren't too tired, after the show, we'll go up to Jake's and dance awhile, and take a little walk, because it will be moonlight over the valley; and then to-morrow the last train out—I've looked it up carefully—I'll give you time to make your next stand."

They finished their breakfast in silence; at noon he had a letter from home,

but it lay unopened by his plate; they jested through supper in desperate gaiety. She had played a matinee, and after her night turn was over she looked so frail and spent that he asked her again if she felt too tired. "No, no," she assured him with a dash of fire that was quite unlike the cold glamour of her stage deportment.

They climbed up the winding path to Jake's. The pavilion was covered with creepers and the sides were partly let down, and through the autumn foliage they could see the floor already swirly with dancers.

"Sometimes," he said, "there's rather a rough crowd comes here; but they'll let us alone, and the music's good—the only dance-hall in the West where they know how to play a slow waltz."

"I'm afraid I'm not much at parlor dancing any more," she said timidly.

But after their first round of the floor, he set her fears at rest. It seemed as if they had been dancing together always. During the intermissions they sat silent, apart from the others. Theirs was the perfect hour, too deep for speech.

And then in the midst of it all, a burly announcer stepped out and shouted, "One more dance, ladies and gentlemen, —and the home waltz."

They looked at each other blankly. Their faces went white with a miserable heart sinking. The boy bit his lips and Lily's eyelids fluttered. Then yearningly he gathered her to his arms and they swung out across the hall, their feet seeming scarcely to touch the floor. He could feel the beating of her heart. The cameo of his ring pressed tight into her slim fingers. In their ears sounded the sad, sweet boom of the music; and outside lay the valley, bathed in moonlight.

It was soon over, the home waltz. The lights were lowered. The dancers dispersed in laughing couples toward the town. The boy and Lily waited until the last, then mounted on up the hillside to the summit and found a shelter from the night breeze against a trunk of a giant fallen tree.

It was Lily who first broke their silence. "This has been the happiest week of my life," she breathed softly. "I wish —I could die—to-night."

"Not die, but dance on forever."

"Dance on forever," she repeated; then with a somber shrug: "But life isn't built that way; to-morrow you go back to your muddy ditch and I pass on to the next stand with my silly steps and stale songs. Oh, I wish—"

But what else she wished she never said, for suddenly his arms tightened about her, his voice cried pleadingly in her ear: "Oh, Lily, don't go! I can't bear to have you. Stay here with me."

"I can't. They never book but a week at the Palace, and I'd have to cancel—"

"Not that, Lily." He pressed her close. "I mean stay on with me here—always."

She looked at him with strange, frightened eyes. A little cry escaped her. She struggled in his arms, but he would not release her. He went on with his pleading: "Lily, don't you love me? Wont you stay? You needn't be afraid of *them*. I'm of age now. I can marry whom I want to."

"Marry?" The word slipped softly from her lips like the passport to some strange paradise, and for a moment she sank back against his breast.

"Lily, I love you." He drew her face toward his.

Her frail body stiffened; she sprang away from his kiss. "Oh don't!—I can't—I mustn't. Let me go! I must get up—I must think—I—"

She glided out of his embrace and left him empty-armed, following her with hurt eyes to the edge of the cliff, where she stood pushing back her hair from her pale forehead and gazing out over the dark valley with troubled brows. It seemed an eternity before she came back, and rested her hand on his shoulder, and said gently, "Luther."

He caught her fingers and tried to draw her down beside him. "Please," she whispered. "You only make it harder for me. I don't know what I've been thinking of. I never dreamed—but I couldn't marry you, Luther. I—"

"You don't love me," he cried bitterly; "you've just been playing with me; you—I s'pose it's the same in every town; you've got some one you string along—"

"Hush." She put her fingers over his

lips. "Don't speak like that. I do love you, Luther—more than this miserable little life of my own. That's why I couldn't marry you. It's you who don't love me—like that, Luther." She knelt above him and rested her hand against his cheek to soften the sadness of her words. "This week has been quite perfect—but it wouldn't last. Think of your home, your folks. Some day you'll go back to that big white house in New Hampshire, and you'd have to introduce me as your wife. Just now you like me a great deal, and pity me a little, and are very lonely, but some morning you'd wake up and find I was only a plain little actress, uneducated, and homely, and common."

"Oh, Lily, you aren't common—I'd take you anywhere—I'd be proud of you!" burst from him brokenly.

"It isn't just that." Her lips tightened. "It's the way life's—threw me up against the bricks; the things I've seen, and been, and done. I've never been bad, Luther. But I was brought up without a mother—or worse, and I've tramped in burlesque, and gone out to supper with 'gentlemen friends,' and traveled the easy gait of the road. And those things leave their mark. Oh, God,"—she put her hands up to her face suddenly—"how I wish I could wipe it all out!"

When she looked down again, he had turned away from her and his shoulders were shaking. She stretched her arms about him and drew his head into her lap. "You do believe I love you, Luther?" He nodded, his tears falling on her fingers clasped about his neck. "Then you mustn't feel like this. You'll always be my friend, the best friend I've got. And you'll never know what this week has been to me. It has changed everything. Why, I've always thought that men were beasts and women cats. In all my life I've never met a fresh, clean-minded college boy or spoken to a lady like your sister. But now I know that all life isn't hateful, that there is another beautifuller world some people live in, and I can go on my way, and do my poor little song and dance, and not mind—so much. And those long afternoons in the train—when they come now, I'll close my eyes and think back to the good

times we had here together, and every night, I expect, I'll be playing to you out in the orchestra. And sometimes I'll know that, over your cigar in the lobby or down there in the ditch, you are thinking of me too. You will be my friend, wont you, Luther?"

"I will,"—he pressed her fingers and looked up bravely—"the best I can—if I can never be anything else. But, Lily, I can't bear to have you go on out there in the tank towns all alone. You'll write to me every stand; you'll let me know if—"

She shook her head. "It's the life I've always led. And I couldn't stand it to write to you, Luther—it would break me up."

"But how can I be your friend, if you go away like this? Promise me, Lily, if you should ever—change your mind, or be ill, or need me, you'll let me know."

"Yes," she promised. "I will."

He took the cameo ring from his finger and put it on hers, with one of her own cheap rings for a guard. "Wear it for me," he said.

"As long as I live, I'll wear it," she answered softly.

And then they felt a gust of chill wind, looked up and saw that the stars were dimming and the moon hidden behind a mist; and they got up and hurried silently down the trail, past the deserted pavilion, over the leaf-trodden road, and up the vacant street of the town. An arc light sputtered in front of the Rawlings House. The night clerk was asleep in his chair.

At the door Lily suddenly faced him and held him off at arm's length, with her hands on his shoulders. "Take off your cap, Luther. I want to remember you—always—as you are—to-night."

He took off his cap, and on his hair, and face, and big chest that was still choking down its bitterness, he felt a gaze that seemed to see for time and all eternity. At last, when he felt he could no longer bear it, she dropped her arms from his shoulders, and said simply, "Good-by, Luther."

"Good-night," he corrected, with a pale smile. "Remember, we still have dinner to-morrow, pal-ess, and maybe—you'll change your mind."

"No—and this is our real good-by. Kiss me, Luther."

Their lips met; their hands vied in a strong, steady pressure; then the hotel door clicked and left him alone to the desolate streets, and interminable cigars, and hope against hope for the morrow.

It was almost dawn when he turned in; but he was in the lobby again by eight, asking the clerk if Miss Davidge had come down.

"She's gone. Had a special breakfast and left on the six o'clock." And seeing the boy's disappointed face, he added pityingly: "I guess she had a long jump ahead of her. She left this for you."

He took the flat little note, with a hump at one end of it, and went into the dining-room. Over his breakfast he read it.

Forgive me. I didn't dare to wait for the late train. I was afraid of myself. I'm putting in this rhinestone ring. I was ashamed to give it to you last night. I don't know if even the setting is solid. But this morning I thought maybe you'd like to wear it anyway, to help you remember—

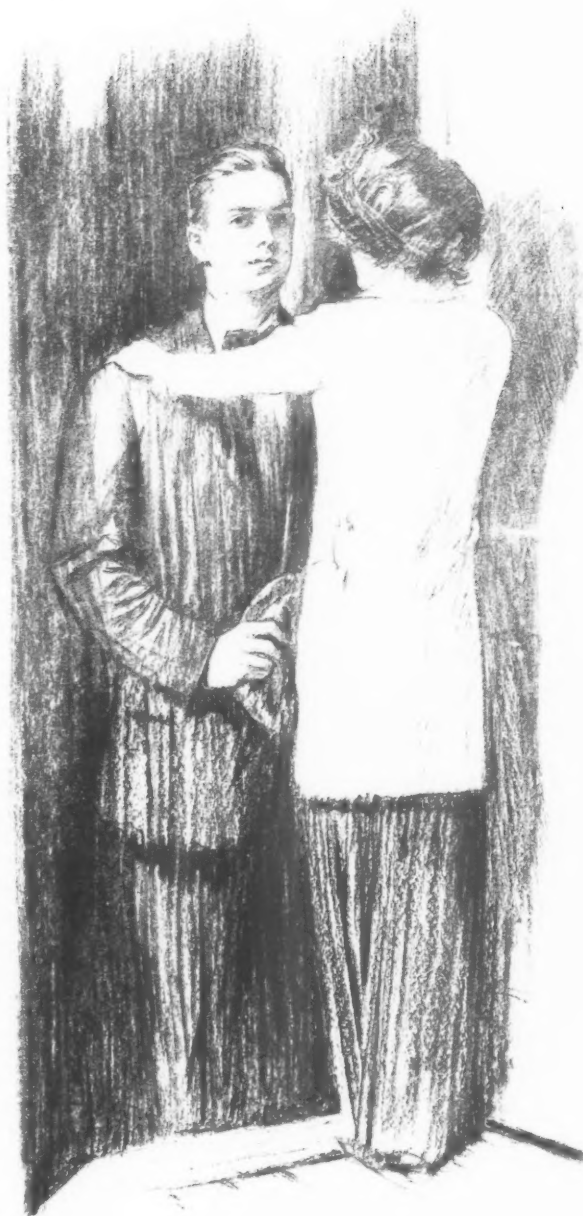
LILY.

As if he should ever forget her! A mist rose before his eyes and he put out his hand to the place where she always sat, as if he must still find her there. His coffee cooled and his egg remained unbroken. He couldn't bear to think of anyone else sitting in that place. As he left the table, he stole around and turned up her chair, and the waitress understood.

He had on the ring. It fitted his little finger and that comforted him some; but, all in all, it was the longest Sunday he had ever spent.

And many of the days that followed were just as long. He plunged desperately into his work, and walked a great deal, and smoked inveterately. Sometimes of an evening he dropped into the Palace, and sometimes went up to the stuffy little parlor of the hotel and tried to pick out the pieces she had played for him. His letters from home piled up unanswered, and his pictures lay in a dusty huddle on his dresser.

When December closed down, Trask



"Take off your cap, Luther. I want to remember you--always--as you are--to-night."

went on to the Coast; but the boy remained behind. Every day he asked for his mail with a flush and a tremor. He was afraid she might write and he was afraid she mightn't. If she didn't, that meant, at least, she was not ill. If she did—well, it might only mean that she had changed her mind,—he never abandoned that hope,—or was just sending him a friendly line, or wanted him to come on and visit her. He thought sometimes of trying to trace her through the *Bill-board*; but he decided that would be taking an unfair advantage.

It came at last, one bleak December morning, in a square envelope, addressed in a strange hand that sent a chill to his heart. He squinted at the postmark, hurried up to his room, and opened it with trembling fingers. A bit of paste-board fell out on the table before him. It was Lily's professional card. "Miss Lily Davidge," it read, "Specialty Artist,—Songs, Dances, Impersonations,—Presented by Rosemeyer and Howe, Booking Agents." And across the printing was scrawled in Lily's own slanting hand the one word, "*Come*." He turned over the envelope and found a return address: "Mrs. Abbie Bemis, Calgary, Alberta." And the cancellation was already twenty hours old!

He was frantic: alone up there in the wilds, stranded, perhaps snowbound, perhaps ill,—she never dressed warmly enough, never took any care of herself,—perhaps penniless, perhaps—

He slung a few things into a bag and put on his heavy ulster. His watch said only nine and he could not leave till late afternoon; but it would be something to tramp up and down the depot platform.

But Midas was on a sleepy branch and the connections were poor; so it was the afternoon of the following day before he reached Calgary and found the sequestered boarding-house of Mrs. Bemis.

A kindly-faced woman in a print dress and with a shawl over her shoulders, answered his knock. "Is Miss Davidge in?" he flashed, before she had fairly shot back the bolt.

"In? She's dead." And she pointed to a wisp of crêpe that dropped from the knocker.

He staggered back against the balustrade, so white that she came out on the threshold, and caught his arm, and drew him inside. "I beg your pardon," she said. "I shouldn't have told you so sudden. I presume you're the young man Miss Davidge was expecting. Come in out of the cold. I expect you've traveled a long ways. I'll steep you a cup of tea, and warm you up before the setting-room fire, and tell you about your friend."

He refused the tea and sat down desolate in a stiff-backed chair before the stove. "Tell me," he besought her; "when did she die?"

"The night after she sent you that card. She'd caught a dreadful cold from an unheated dressing-room the last theatre she played, and she was took down the day she got here. Pneumony, and it finishes 'em quick. But I'm not one to turn out sick folks. She had the best doctor around and I nursed her myself. It was no trouble to do for her, poor thing. She was a lady, refined, not like the run of them vaudeville actresses.

"And what do you think! She left a hundred dollars to bury herself with. She said I should take my pay first; but I aint touched a cent. And I've laid her out, and sent off for a bookay of flowers like them she's named after, and I'm going to give a funeral from here, just the same as if she was my own daughter.

"I expect you're Luther, aint you—Luther Van Dorn? She used to say your name a good many times; but I could never make it out right if you was her brother, or maybe her cousin, or only a gentleman friend."

Mrs. Bemis got up and fetched an envelope from the mantelpiece. "She said she knew you'd come, and if you did, I was to give you this. It was wrote the same time as the card she sent you. Perhaps, if you'd like—in the parlor there—and I've got some cooking in my kitchen I must tend to."

When he looked up, the letter was in his hand and he was alone. He crossed over to the parlor and shut the door, then halted a moment, looking frightenedly about the musty room with its cheap chromos, gaudy tidies, and the landlady's "bookay" on a center-table.

It was the first time he had ever stood in a death chamber and he was conscious of an unseen Presence there that numbed him. But he squared his jaw, went over to a window, and sat down to read her last message. Out of the envelope fell his cameo ring; he picked it up with a poignant memory of her words: "As long as I live, I'll wear it."

The writing was scrawled on a single page:

Dear Luther:

I'm sorry, but I'm afraid I've broken my promise. I thought it was only a cold, but they tell me you will scarcely get this—in time. You mustn't grieve, Luther. I am willing to go, and everything kind has been done for me. You are the one big thing I'm taking with me, and I want you always to save a little place for me in your life. May all good come to you, Luther. Your folks, your home—go back to them, and some day find the girl that is destined for you and treat her as you have me, and she'll be the happiest girl in the world. And please, Luther, don't go on any more sprees with Traskie. If you go back to that school, pass the stage women up, and the cards. They're cheap, dearest. And always remember, whatever you do is done; you can't wipe it out; you can't—

The writing trailed off in illegible scratches, and below was a faint attempt to sign herself "Lily."

He sat with her letter in his hands for a long time; then he went over and stood beside her rough bier, and looked down into her face, veiled in the great mystery that was passed on now to Another more worthy than he. He put the cameo ring back upon her finger. He bent over and brushed her still lips, then

stumbled toward the door and left her alone with the heavy scent of the landlady's stale lilies.

The irrigation project is finished long since, and the construction camp closed, and the young engineer who was so very lonely has gone back to his own people. He has won a degree now, has an office in the city, and goes up and down the broad land superintending other projects and constructions, and is altogether too busy with the larger project of life to be very lonely now; but he has never forgotten the little actress who asked him to pass the pepper in the Rawlings House. He still wears her pinchbeck ring, and sometimes, in his gable room in the big white house in New Hampshire, sometimes at his desk, with blue

prints and specifications scattered about him, sometimes in the rush of the city streets, or when in the midst of a pleasant evening his hand closes

about the stem of a bubbling glass, or the gaze of a scented siren rests on his, his jaw squares, his lips tighten, and his narrowed eyes look back upon Midas, straggling up against the hillside, and Jake's pavilion, and the bleak mountain summit where, on the edge of the cliff, a tiny grassplot stands with a low mound, and an iron fence, and a broad white slab, with the inscription, deep in graven letters:

TO THE MEMORY
OF
LILY, BELOVED
OF
LUTHER VAN DORN.





The JUSTICE of the SANDS

By Albert Payson Terhune

Author of "Whose Wife?" etc.

ILLUSTRATED
BY
C. B. FALLS

BLAKE, kicking a double tattoo against the ribs of his mule, breasted the last of a series of ridges which gave that particular sweep of the Syrian Desert the look of a huge ploughed field.

Behind the rider, and indeed in every direction, stretched away the miles of red-yellow sand, now smoothed into flat plains, now humped into ridges and dunes. For the desert is as full of in-

equalities as is any other region. And more so, since the sand shifts before gale and simoon into as many and as weird formations as drift snow.

Blake's mule, head hung and ears a-flop from crass fatigue, toiled dolefully up the ridge, dislodging tiny avalanches of sand at every plunging step of the heavy going. Blake himself was in little better case than his mount. His canteen was empty; his eyes were blurred and

stinging from glare and from flying sand-particles: his throat was throbbing with thirst; the sun hammered mercilessly through his pith helmet and pugaree. Also he was frightened—terribly frightened. For nearly a month he had been in sick fear.

Squinting, he could see at the ridge's crest a stark figure against the blue-and-copper of the sky. The figure, as the mule plunged stumblingly toward the summit, gradually took to itself such hazy details as a dirty white robe, a torn red burnouse, a *kafich* head-dress wherein tarnished tinsel was twined, a thin brown face that peeped from under the *kafich*-folds, a long flintlock whose butt snuggled into the bearer's arm socket while its egregious length of muzzle found rest on the sand.

Toward this moveless Arab, Blake had been shaping his course for two hours, indeed, ever since he had caught an uncertain glimpse of him through the pulsing heat-waves along the eastern skyline. And now when the figure was a bare hundred and fifty yards distant, the rider lifted his right hand high above his head, palm forward, in the universal peace-sign.

Scarce waiting to see the salute returned, Blake twisted nervously in the saddle and scanned the yellow-red miles behind him. Yes, the Spot was still there. And somewhat nearer, it seemed, than when last he had looked—the black spot that had at first differed from the heat-spots which swam and danced before Blake's tired eyes only by the fact that it kept in its approximate place along the sand and did not pirouette in air at every move of the inflamed eyelids.

Early that morning—his third morning out from Damascus—Blake had first seen the Spot. And, though it was then tiny and amorphous, he had felt instinctively what it was—had felt and had trembled and gone ill with terror.

He had known it was no wandering camel or beast of prey. How he had known it. Blake could not have told you. Perhaps by the mystic sixth sense of the fugitive, to whom all men are pursuers.

Yet he had known. And every toiling, tediously hurrying hour since then had deepened his conviction. The Spot was

moving, as he himself moved; in the same direction, and, it appeared, faster. It was even beginning to take form.

Blake turned his gaze again toward the near-by summit. And there, instead of one figure, stood a half score, all in robes of white or yellow or gray and with burnouses whose red folds displayed vary-

ing degrees of uncleanness.

"Good?" muttered Blake, addressing his worn-out mule—a habit three days of desert solitude had taught him. "That means their camp is near. Probably in the hollow beyond the crest. The first one was a sentry—just as I hoped he might be. He signaled the others to come up."

He slid awkwardly from his mule, his cramped legs well nigh buckling under him, and lurched forward on foot for the few yards of deep going that separated him from the stolidly waiting Bedouins.

"*Salaam Alaikum.*" he croaked, his voice coming gratingly from dry throat and drier lips. "To your tribe, peace and the countenance of Allah the Compassionate!"

He spoke in halting Arabic, barbarous of accent and further impeded by the drouth that gripped his throat. Yet his words were evidently intelligible to the men to whom he spoke. For their looks of studied uninterest changed ever so little. And from several of them came in irregular chorus the conventional greeting:

"*Naharak-said.*"

"My day is happy for beholding you," panted Blake. "I come to you as a guest,

WE feel that Albert Payson Terhune is rapidly becoming one of this country's premier short story men. His vividness in writing is in a class by itself. This story takes you into the desert with a Yankee man-hunter, and actually makes you feel the stifling waves of heat of the setting. ■ ■ ■ ■

throwing myself upon the eternal Guest Law of the Desert. Do you receive me, oh brothers of eagles?"

A dozen arms were raised in the peace-sign. In an instant the group had broken up its stiff formation, and its members were crowding about the guest. One of them led the mule forward. A second and third made as though to kiss Blake's sun-blistered hands. Forming an escort of honor about the stranger, they led him over the rise and down the farther slope.

In the Desert, both policemen and restaurants are less than infrequent. To atone for this dual deficiency, the Arab tribes—as far back as the days of Genesis—framed the solemn Guest Law, the law whereby every wanderer who claims the right must be succored and protected by whatsoever tribe whose camp he may chance upon. It is a law unbroken and unbreakable. To it, Blake had just appealed; nor appealed in vain.

Down the slope his hosts escorted him to where a village camp of black goat-hair tents nestled under the lee of the dune, the summer camp of some tribal "family," detached for the time from the main body of its people.

There were perhaps twenty-five tents in all—low, black, long—in the camp's single "street." A knot of veiled, blue-robed women and staring, half-nude children clustered at the street's end to see the newcomer arrive. Several men came forward from tent-doors to swell the welcoming party of escorts.

In front of the largest tent a spear, driven into the earth, denoted the residence of the Sheik. Toward this tent Blake's new hosts led him. Within, cross-legged, upon a red morocco camel saddle, sat a tall, slender man, aquiline of nose, lofty of cheekbone, delicately high-bred of face and expression. He rose gracefully as Blake drew near, and came halfway to the entrance to meet him.

Blake, summoning to his memory certain scraps of Bedouin etiquette that he had chanced to pick up during an earlier two-year sojourn in Alexandria, halted in the doorway long enough to kick off his dusty low shoes. Then, touching his breast and forehead with the fingers of

his right hand, he advanced toward the Sheik.

The latter, meeting him halfway, stooped in proud humility to kiss the guest's hand. Blake had sense enough to remember the next move—which was to withdraw his hand from the impending caress and raise it to his own lips.

The conventional phrases of Oriental welcome being spoken and replied to, the Sheik and Blake seated themselves on a gaudy carpet, spread upon the bare ground of the tent. A few of the chief men of the tribe followed their example. The rest loitered inquisitively outside.

The Sheik clapped his hands. Almost on the moment, the curtain separating the main room of his tent from the "kitchen end" was pulled aside and two veiled women came in. One bore on a tray a tin pot of coffee, surrounded by handleless cups; the other a huge platter containing a stew of goat flesh and lentils and flanked by loaves of hot, unleavened bread and little dishes of curds and of strained honey.

Then, fingers serving the double rôle of knife and of fork, the feast began.

The meal over, Blake lay stretched on the carpet strip, sucking at a bubble pipe. The coolness and half darkness of the tent, the full meal he had eaten, his unwonted feeling of safety after peril—all made him wax expansively talkative.

"My host," he said, "how shall I call your name when memory brings with it gratitude?"

"I am Yusef, Sheik of El-Maghrib," was the reply, the host forbearing to commit the gross breach of etiquette of inquiring a guest's name.

But Blake made up for any such reticence. Lazily sprawling there, drawing in great mouthfuls of cool smoke, the terror that had so long gripped him banished, he began his *Odyssey*.

"I am an American, oh Sheik Yusef," he said, in his vilely ill-accented, hesitating Arabic. "My name is Blake. Oswald Blake."

"May peace rest upon your house," courteously interposed the Sheik.

"I speak your language," went on Blake, inclining his head in recognition of the Bedouin's courtesy, "because for

two years, as a young man. I was book-keeper in the Messagerie bank at Iskenderia. Later, I returned to my own land, where I found high service with another banker. Of late, enemies sought my ruin. They would have cast me into prison. I fled. Whither should I go but to the East that I loved? So hither I came. To Damasch-us-shem. But an emissary of mine enemies tracked me. I had word of his coming and I fled into the desert. Three days have I wandered, knowing that soon or late I should meet some tribe of El-Badawi, who would grant me the guest right and guard me from my pursuers."

"By the Guest Law you are inviolate, *howaji*," returned the Sheik, "and your foes become forthwith the foes of El-Maghrib."

"It is as I hoped," said Blake, "and from my heart I thank you. My mule fell, in a sand hole, a day's journey to westward, and my canteen spilled. If I had not met your men to-day I should have been jackal-meat by the morrow. Under this sun, thirst is torture."

"My tent and all I have is yours," formally replied the Sheik; yet Blake half-fancied there was more courtesy than cordiality in Yusef's tone.

A Bedouin halted at the tent door and called out something. The words were spoken too rapidly for Blake to catch their import. But Sheik Yusef straightened himself to a sitting posture and waited expectant. Uneasily, dreading he scarce knew what, Blake raised himself on one elbow and blinked out at the blinding glare of the afternoon sun.

Another moment and the square of merciless light was blocked. Several Bedouins stood there. Among them and a little to the front was a man whose aspect would better have accorded with a New Hampshire hill-farm than with the Syrian Desert.

Long he was, rather than tall, leathery and seamed of visage, large of hands, enormous of feet. His costume was of shiny black "diagonal." On his grizzled head, thrust well back, was a dusty black derby. The heat that had so nearly killed Blake seemed to have made far less impression on this creature of bone and gristle. The saddled Syrian pony

that cropped sparse desert-grass in the open space just behind him seemed far more exhausted and heat-stricken than did he. Blake eyed the stranger with grinning bravado—even as, at a great distance, on the desert, he had viewed him with panic fear.

Sheik Yusef rose, as before, and came forward to greet this newest guest. But the stranger paid no heed to the action. His keen little eyes had fallen on Blake. One stride of his long legs brought him towering above the half-recumbent figure of his fellow-American.

"Oswald J. Blake," he said, his nasal voice hoarse with much dust, "you're my pris'ner. Here's the warrant; and here's the extradition papers, all properly viséd by the authorities in Damaschus. Get up and come along."

Blake's grinning face had gone a bit white. But now he laughed in derision that was not wholly feigned, as he answered, without stirring:

"My friend, this is not the Detective Bureau at New York Police Headquarters. This is the Syrian Desert. I am a guest in a Bedouin camp."

"I don't care a hoot where you are," snapped the New Englander. "I was sent after you and I've got you. Come along."

"Thanks," said Blake lazily. "But I'm fairly comfortable where I am."

The detective thrust one hand into his hip pocket. At the gesture Blake turned swiftly to the Sheik, who, with his tribesmen, stood looking on in dumb wonder.

"Sheik Yusef!" he exclaimed. "This is the pursuer of whom I spoke. He would drag me to prison. Help me."

The Sheik spoke a brief word of command. The lank New Englander, half-turning to learn the cause of an ensuing movement on the part of the men around him, found himself gazing alternately into the black mouths of five flintlock guns. His hand left his hip pocket and both arms went straight upward over his head with a promptitude that was all but galvanic.

Blake leaned back again with a blissful smile.

"Belden, my friend," he chuckled, "you're in the wrong pew. I told you this wasn't Police Headquarters. Better



"I take it," he snarled, addressing the Sheik, "that you're the chief of this outfit. Well, sir, let me tell you, Bureau in New York. I've got a warrant here for this man's arrest on a charge of embezzling here's his extradition papers, signed at Damascus by your own government. And now is the time I take him back with me. So just ask



I'm Ezra T. Belden,—formerly of Plymouth, N. H., at present attached to the Central Office Detective \$275,000 from the Aaron Burr Savings Bank of New York City, where he was cashier. And Look 'em over, if you like. I've tracked this crook halfway across the world. these fellow coons of yours to put down their artillery, will you?"

clear out. It'll be healthier for you."

The New Englander scowled around the circle. He glowered at the leveled guns. Then his angry little eyes sought out Sheik Yusef.

"I take it," he snarled, addressing the Sheik, "that you're the chief of this outfit. Well, sir, let me tell you. I'm Ezra T. Belden—formerly of Plymouth, N. H., at present attached to the Central Office Detective Bureau in New York. I've got a warrant here for this man's arrest on a charge of embezzling \$275,000 from the Aaron Burr Savings Bank of New York City, where he was cashier. And here's his extradition papers, signed at Damascus by your own government. Look 'em over, if you like. I've tracked this crook halfway across the world. And now is the time I take him back with me. So just ask these fellow coons of yours to put down their artillery, will you?"

Belden's harangue, voiced in flawless provincial New Hampshire English, was as the notes of a horse-fiddle to the ears of Sheik Yusef and his tribesfolk. The Sheik turned to Blake:

"What does your enemy say?" he queried politely.

"He says," answered Blake, "that he stamps upon the Guest Law and that he terms all Badawi as brethren to swine."

A growl ran through the knot of listeners. The Sheik's high-bred face went livid under its brown tan. Darting a glance at the gun-bearers, he opened his mouth as though to give an order. But Belden interposed.

"I don't know what this man's been telling you, chief," he said, "but I'll lay dollars to doughnuts it's a lie. Say!"—lifting his voice, "is there anybody here who can talk a few words of English? If there is, I'll make it worth his while to act as interpreter. Savvy Ingles? Hey? Anybody?"

The Sheik hesitated. Guessing at the sense of Belden's appeal, or perhaps belatedly doubting the entire accuracy of Blake's translation, he called loudly:

"Ohé, Halil! Halil-ibn-Nassar!"

From the rear of the little crowd that fringed the tent door, a man elbowed his way forward.

"Halil," commanded the Sheik, "ask this *feringhee* if indeed he likened the men of El-Maghrib to unclean swine?"

In limping English Halil repeated the query.

"No!" snorted Belden. "I don't know who Maghrib is or whether he's a swine or not. Quit your silly questions and do some interpreting for me. It's five dollars—six *mejdie*, you understand?—in your pocket, if you do some good, quick translating. You know enough English to do it?"

"Yes, *howaji*," answered Halil. "For five years I was donkeyman at El-Caire, to the Ingles—while I worked to pay off the debt of my father and to release him from the Khedivial prison. Five years of slavery—I, a son of the Desert!"

"Never mind your family history. Tell the chief there that I'm a detective—a police official—come to take this man away. Tell him my papers are in good order, signed by the authorities at the *serail* in Damascus. Say he'll get into a peck of trouble with the Turkish Government if he blocks me. And tell him for the land's sake to make those fellers stop p'inting their gaspipe guns at me."

Halil translated, more than once interrupted by a protest or wrathful correction from Blake. The Sheik, civilly motioning Blake to be silent, made reply:

"Sheik Yusef of El-Maghrib bids me to say," translated Halil, "that this man is his guest. And by Guest Law of Desert he cannot give him up to Law. Likewise that in the desert and in the camp of El-Maghrib, he and not the Turks is the government. He refuse."

"If he means he's the local Justice of the Peace," persisted Belden, "I'm willing to show him my papers. He can countersign 'em if he likes. About every other official in Syria has done it. At a *mejdie* per sign. They look like an autograph album. I—"

The Sheik asked a question. Blake sprang up to interpose; but before he could prevent its transmission, Halil had repeated it to Belden.

"Sheik Yusef says what has this man done? What is his sin?"

"Done?" returned Belden. "Oh, nothing much. Just stole a trifle over \$275,000 from a bank in New York. That's all. By my reckoning, \$275,000 comes to something like 350,000 silver *mejdie* in your money."

Halil's jaw dropped. Unsteadily he eyed Belden, searching to know if this were some sample of Occidental humor. But the detective was very evidently in earnest. And Halil—shamefacedly, as one who tells what cannot be believed—translated to the Sheik.

"*Maschallah!*" gasped Sheik Yusef, to an undercurrent of exclamations from the throng outside the doorway.

Everyone looked at Blake, then at Belden. The former suddenly felt the stirrings of that ebullient vanity which ever dogs the true criminal.

"It is true, oh Sheik Yusef," he corroborated. "It is quite true as to the sum. But not that I am a thief. I was treated unjustly. My rightful wage was withheld. They gave me a beggarly pittance instead of the salary I merited. For years I endured it—the slavery, the poverty, the hopelessness of it all. Then I—"

"Three hundred and fifty thousand *mejdie!*" bleated the Sheik.

"Then I rebelled," proclaimed Blake, working himself up to a fine glow of indignation. "The directors were rich. I was poor. They loafed. I slaved. Yet they laughed when I asked for rightful reward!"

"Three hundred and—"

"So when the chance came, I took what would make me and would not break them," went on Blake. "A sum that will repay my years of ill-recompensed labor and give me the rest of my days in plenty. By sharing the deficit among themselves, the directors can make it up without pinching their pockets. To them it is a trifle. To me it was *life!*"

He was on his feet now, carried away by his own oratory—the more so since the former looks of cold civility toward himself in the faces of the Sheik and the tribesmen were now replaced by something akin to awe.

Of the financial details he had been expounding, they understood little and

cared somewhat less. One glaring, tremendous fact, though, was in the minds of all: This barbarian, who spoke their tongue so ill, had somewhere, somehow, managed to steal a fortune—a fortune compared to which their own petty lootings of caravans and of rival tribes were as the merest nothings. Wherefore, to the arch-robber those outlawed minor robbers of the desert did due mental reverence.

Their utmost net gains, from the rather more than neighborly interest they were wont to take in other tribes' cattle and in the goods of ill-guarded caravans, must needs mount up for years before reaching so fabulous a sum as three hundred and fifty thousand *mejdie*.

As the cross-roads grocer might eye John D. Rockefeller, as some French village mayor might have eyed Napoleon, so did these children of the sun lavish mute tribute upon the genius of their guest.

Ezra T. Belden observed the changed demeanor of the tribesfolk toward his intended captive and, by handing six silver *mejdie* in advance to Halil, induced the latter to recover sufficiently from his trance of veneration to put into English the gist of Blake's boastful speech.

"Tell 'em," exhorted Belden, when he had heard, "tell 'em this man didn't just rob a board of fat directors. Tell 'em he robbed a lot of poor folks—depositors that a ten-dollar bill looks mighty big to. Tell 'em the news of Blake's get-away with the \$275,000 brought a run on the bank and pretty near ruined hundreds of people. Tell 'em all that; an' see then if they'll keep on gawpin' at him like he was Teddy Roosevelt and Caruso rolled into one."

Halil made shift to translate to the Sheik so much of the New Englander's exhortation as he himself could understand. The reply had no visible effect on the Bedouins. The sufferings of the robbed were no novelty to them.

Bound though they were by immemorable law to feed and protect any stranger who might come to their camp, they were never in the least dilatory in relieving of his goods any promising looking traveler whom they might

chance to meet abroad in the desert. To his bedraggled, impoverished appearance, no doubt, had Blake owed his escape from attack, that day, long ere he could have reached the borders of the camp.

To the Arab mind, the outward and visible sign of a foreigner's wealth is the size of his caravan or equipment. Blake and Belden, having none, had passed for folk too poor to be worth robbing, at the risk of later government interference.

Blake laughed in the detective's face, a hearty, wholesouled laugh.

"My sleuth friend," he scoffed, "you've done a neat bit of work tracking me across Europe and across the desert. I'll grant you that. But, now you've done it, you'd better start back while the going's good. I'm among friends here. And I'm going to stay among 'em—a year, if it's necessary—till I can see a good chance to square myself at home, or to slip over to some non-extradition port. These Bedouins aren't going to give me up. It's against their laws, for one thing. And, for another, you've just made me a hero in their eyes. They're in the same general line of business themselves. There's hardly one of these tribes that isn't outlawed by the Turkish government. That's why I struck out for the desert."

Belden made another appeal, through the interpreter.

"Tell 'em," he ordered, "that unless they give me my prisoner, I'll have a regiment of Syrian cavalry out here after 'em in two shakes. And Uncle Sam'll send a warship to Beirut, into the bargain."

"I will translate if you wish, *hoteaji*," responded Halil. "But to what good? By law we must protect him while he is our guest. The Syrian cavalry we have all times eluded with ease—when we have not ambushed it. And your Uncle Samuel—on whom be peace!—is far away—wherever he may be. And his ships cannot sail the sands."

"Tell 'em, that as sure as my name is Belden, I'm going to get this man. I get what I go for. I'll get him if I have to track him clear through to Persia. They'll save time by giving him up."

Laboriously, Halil sought to convey the message to Sheik Yusef. The detective listened closely, trying to catch its sense. At one point he broke out crossly:

"*Persia*, I said. Not *Bersia*."

"No use!" scoffed Blake. "The Arabs have no letter 'P' in their alphabet; and they couldn't pronounce it if they had. With them, the 'P' is always 'B.' Don't let it rile you."

The detective's translated threat aroused scant interest in anyone. The Sheik indeed did not seem to hear it. Athwart his smile of reverential admiration had shot a glint of cunning. He addressed Blake, smoothly.

"Assuredly, oh *effendi*," quoth he, "to bear away so vast a treasure as three hundred and fifty thousand *mejdie* were a task worthy a *djinnee*. And to bear it across seas to our land were still greater labor. But perchance you buried it before you left your country."

"Buried it!" sneered Blake. "For any cheap detective to dig up? Not I. I brought it along."

The vanity that made him boast made him also deaf to the possible import of a sibilant gasp that met his statement. Taking the sound for one of admiring wonder, he bragged on:

"Buried it? I'm no fool. I didn't bury it and I didn't bank it. I did the only sane thing. I brought it with me. A thousand or so in my pockets for expenses. The rest is *here*!"

He accompanied the last word with a gesture that indicated his own anatomy from shoulder to waistline. The Arabs looked puzzled. The Sheik stared at the somewhat bulky upper body of the American, then ventured:

"It is a jest, perhaps? The thinnest of mankind could not carry so much as five thousand silver *mejdie*—to say naught of 350,000—in money belts around his body, without becoming as round as a war-drum. And you are not overfat. My guest is pleased to be merry."

Blake unfastened the breast of his waistcoat and shirt, briefly revealing, beneath, a swathing of waterproof silk. Then, re-closing the front of his shirt, he answered:

"The money is not in silver, but in much handier form. You know nothing of our currency, here, so I can't well explain. The cash is in compact, portable shape. In gold certificates and—"

"Gold!" cried the Sheik. "It grows plainer. Gold leaf and gold dust and perhaps in your native gold coins. I begin to understand. Yet—little as I know of gold's weight, I can scarce see how so huge a sum can be pressed in so small a compass."

"I can't explain," said Blake, shirking the tedious explanation of the paper money theory and the national credit system, to a semi-savage. "You would not get my meaning. But the cash is there. Girt around my body and protected by the silk."

"Son," drawled Belden, "if, as I gather from your antics, you're showing these coons where your loot is cached, you're a bigger fool than I took you for."

"Thanks for your loving care of my interests," retorted Blake. "But I know the East. While I am these peoples' guest, I could strow their camp six inches deep in diamonds; and not a man or woman or child would lay a finger on one of them. Moreover, the whole tribe would fight to the death to protect me and my treasure. That's their law. A fool law, but a convenient one—for me. A law that's never been broken."

"I don't know the desert laws," grunted Belden. "But I know just a little about human nature. And if a crowd of men were looking at me the way these poor benighted heathens are looking at you this minute, I'd grab my watch and wallet with both hands and holler for a cop."

For an hour or more, Belden continued, through Halil, to exhort the Sheik to give up Blake. Courteously, yet firmly, the Sheik refused. He grew taciturn at last; and, from fatigue, Belden desisted.

Night drew on. The herders began to troop back to camp, driving before them from the bleak "pasture hills" a line of black goats, broad-tailed sheep, lean kine, donkeys and camel-calves. Camp fires twinkled through the dusk. The evening meal was served, the Sheik in-

sisting on regarding Belden as his guest on equal terms with Blake.

Soon after supper came the "night-cap" cups of coffee—black, bitter, full of grounds. Then the camp quieted. Belden lay awake for a time, just within the door of the Sheik's tent,—where he, like Blake, was lodged,—listening to the snores of the Arabs, the sniffing of pariah dogs that prowled from tent to tent, the howls of wolves and the yappings of jackals amid the far-off sandhills. At last, the detective could no longer fight off sleep, although some occult instinct seemed to bid him to do so. And he slept like a dead man.

The hot beating of the sun in his face roused Belden. Blinking panifully, he sat up and stared stupidly about him. He was wont to wake quickly and easily, with all his faculties alive. But now for a full half-minute he sat, gripping his aching head, before his brain was clear and the events of the preceding day stood out in their proper order. Then once more he glanced about him.

He distinctly recalled going to sleep inside the doorway of the Sheik's tent. Yet now he lay on the unsheltered sand, the sun broiling him mercilessly; not a tent was in sight.

His eyes swept the surrounding valley and dunes in vain, for glimpse of human figure or of last night's camp. So far as he could see, he sat alone, in the center of illimitable leagues of red-yellow sand. No camp, no Bedouins, no animals, no vestige of yesterday's scenes.

At last his perplexed eyes fell and were caught by something stretched close at his side—the body of a man: Oswald Blake.

Blake lay on his face, just as, by the dying firelight, Belden had seen him settle himself for sleep the night before. Yes, and there, three feet farther on, were the fire's charred remains.

"Blake!" growled Belden, his throat dry as a kiln. "Blake! Are you dead, man? Wake up!"

He shook the inert figure. Blake groaned heavily. A second, harder shake, and the sleeper opened bloodshot eyes and looked dully upward. At sight of Belden he started up and half-drew

a revolver from his coat. And then, as though paralyzed, he sat rigid, gazing open-mouthed about him.

"The camp!" he sputtered. "The camp?"

Belden was studying his surroundings.

"That hole is where the spear stood," he mumbled. "And there's the stake-holes of the chief's tent. There's the picket line where the hosses was tied. There's,"—craning his neck and rising and walking to a bend in the dune, "there's Blake's mule and my pony still tethered where they were last night. Same place. But no camp."

He returned to the still bemused Blake.

"Look here!" said the detective. "I've got the hang of this, I think. You're

sure about that Guest Law? You're dead certain the Bedouins are obliged to protect a man as long as he's a guest in their camp?"

"Of course," muttered Blake. "But—what's happened? Where—"

"*This* has happened, son," announced Belden. "They couldn't touch you or the dough while you were in their camp. They couldn't drive you out of their camp or rob you in it. So they hit on the simple trick of taking the camp off you and lugging it away somewhere. You aint in their camp now, nor liable to be again. But that's not saying you aint liable to meet up with your yesterday's hosts plenty soon."

"What!"

"Our critters are still tied over there.



The hot beating of the sun in his face roused Belden. Blinking painfully, he sat up and stared stupidly about him.

The chief stuck to the law, you see. Wouldn't touch you or yours—or me or mine—while we were in his camp. Get a move on! Something seems to tell me we'll stay healthier if we cut loose in the direction of Damascus without wasting any too much time. Lord, but I've got a thirst that some fellers would give fifty dollars for! And I know why I've got it. It's the coffee. They hoccused it. Hasheesh, or something. It tasted rank. But it kept us asleep. Look!"

He pointed excitedly, as at something behind Blake. The latter slowly turned to see what had so startled his usually steel-nerved pursuer. As Blake turned, Belden deftly pinioned his arms behind him and, with a motion born of long practice, relieved him of his revolver.

Before Blake's dazed senses fairly grasped the situation, there was a harsh click and something cold closed around his right wrist. He looked down, to find his right hand manacled to Belden's left. The thief's overwrought nerves collapsed. He began to cry; weakly, gaspingly. Terror was once more at his throat.

"Mr. Blake," said the detective, "you're my pris'ner. Come."

Dizzily, stumblingly, Blake allowed himself to be led to where the mule and the pony were tied. On the pony's back were a small pigskin of water and a large parcel of food.

"I thought they'd come handy on the return trip," explained Belden, as he gave Blake a swig of the lukewarm water and helped him onto the mule's saddle. "That's why I brought along such a lot. I couldn't be sure just how soon I'd overhaul you."

Glancing at a pocket compass, Belden set the two animals in motion. The detective's lean face was tense. Keenly, he surveyed every quarter of the horizon.

"We'll give 'em a run for it, anyhow," he said, half under his breath, as he belabored the lazy mule once more. "I started out to bring you back, Mr. Blake, and I'm going to. If those coons butt in, anywhere along the route, they'll find my middle name's Trouble."

Blake, who had drunk two cups of "night-cap" coffee to Belden's one, still

rode as in a nightmare. Slowly, very slowly, the drug mists were clearing from his brain. But even now he only subconsciously realized his shift of condition. Sleepily, he clung to his saddle pommel. Headache and nausea were his only clear perceptions. And far behind these, the Fear that made him sob convulsively now and then.

For an hour the captor and captive rode on, almost in silence. Then, as they mounted a ridge that stood above a mass of small surrounding hillocks, Belden's pony lifted its head and whinnied. From a dozen directions the whinny was answered.

In front, behind, on every side, were Arabs—perhaps two score in all. Slipping from sand cuts and from behind hillocks, they seemed to have risen out of the ground. They hemmed in the two Americans in a huge irregular ring. Some were mounted. Some were afoot. Sheik Yusef, on a rawboned stallion, was a little in advance of the rest. They made no move to attack, but remained moveless, alert, guns in hand.

Ezra Belden dragged Blake from his mule and himself slipped to the ground beside him; the mule and the pony affording a partial barrier for them. Belden's automatic pistol was in his hand. Tucking it under his arm, he drew forth Blake's revolver.

"Here's where we make our stand," he said very quietly. "We're two Americans. For the moment, we'll just forget one of us is a cur who robbed widows and orphans; and we'll remember only that we've got to show a passel of heathens how white men can fight for each other."

"They'll—they'll kill us if you fire on them," babbled Blake, his nerve gone. "Put up your pistol and surrender. They wont harm us, then. Sheik Yusef's my friend, my host. He—"

"They wont kill us if they can help it," drawled Belden. "They aren't too ignorant to know that a foreign power would raise hob if two of its citizens were slaughtered in cold blood. And even Arabs aren't looking for unnecessary trouble. But they want that money you were fool enough to blab about. And they mean to have it."

"Oh, I'll give it to them!" wailed Blake. "I'll—"

"But I wont," snapped Belden. "I wont give 'em a nickel of it. I promised to bring you back, and the money with you. And I've got a way of keeping my promises. Look out! They're moving in on us. Here, take your gun back. Can you use it with your left hand? I haven't time to dig out my keys and unfetter you. Aim low, and don't waste shots."

Thrusting the captured weapon into Blake's trembling hand, Belden leveled the automatic across the pony's saddle and took careful aim at Sheik Yusef's chest.

"Don't shoot, I tell you!" howled the frantic Blake. "They'll butcher us like cattle if you kill one of them. I know what Bedouins are. Our only chance is to surrender. Dont—"

Belden pulled the trigger. But the jerk from Blake's writhing body destroyed his aim. The bullet whined high. The New Englander turned on his prisoner with a snarl.

"Stand still, you coward! Don't wiggle around like that!" he cried. "I'll—"

He got no further. Blake's uplifted pistol butt descended full on his head. The stiff derby partly broke the frenzied blow and in turn was hopelessly broken. But the blow, deflected as it was, served to double Belden's legs beneath him and to send him on hands and knees, senseless, at Blake's feet.

Dropping his revolver, Blake raised his unfettered hand in the peace-sign. And the Arabs closed in.

There was no violence. There was need for none. Blake, chattering in fear, the drug and wrenched nerves combining to make a pitiable weakling of him, alternately flattered and entreated them in his worst Arabic. The Bedouins paid no heed. Pausing only to note in mild surprise the odd steel contrivance that linked the screeching captive to the unconscious Belden, they went swiftly to work.

In little more than a second, Blake's garments above the waist were stripped from him. The tight-folded silk bandage was laid bare. With eager hands Sheik Yusef tore asunder the silk and ripped it from the thief's cringing body. Then

from the eagerly crowding circle of Arabs went up a yell of utter dismay.

"What found we?" (Halil, the interpreter, told the story long afterward to a crony in El-Kanah tribe). "What found we? Laugh! Laugh till you burst! The tale of treasure was a *feringhee* lie. Within the silk was no hoard of gold. Not a silver mejidie. Not a copper *metallik*. Naught save row upon row of crackling or greasy sheets of paper,—some yellow, some green,—whereon were pictures and numbers and letters in an unknown tongue.

"Sewn to the silk's innermost side were these oblongs of paper. More than a hundred of them. Perhaps more than two hundred. We had no heart to count them. Nor was there cause to count. For of what value is colored paper? Perchance they were amulets sacred to the *feringhee* gods. I know not. To us they were of no use.

"In his first rage, Sheik Yusef was for slaying the liar and his comrade too. But the long and lean man who lay in a faint had spoken of some alliance with the *serail* at Damasch-us-shem. And the Sheik had no wish to be harried needlessly by the Basha's cavalry, during the grazing season. So, at the last, we rode away and left them."

Away rode the cursing Bedouins, while Blake clutched lovingly at the strip of waterproof silk, which Yusef had hurled back at him. The big-denomination bills sewed to the inner surface were intact. Not one of them was so much as torn.

Then, craft coming to the aid of greed, the fugitive glanced at the inert figure shackled to him, and stooped quickly to pick up one of the fallen pistols. But before he could touch the weapon, a lean, sinewy hand snatched it away.

Belden, who for the past minute or more had been unobtrusively in full possession of his recovered senses, scrambled in leisurely fashion to his feet, the pistol in his free hand.

"And now, son," he drawled, settling the wrecked derby far back on his head, "if it's quite the same to you, we'll be starting on again for Damascus. I guess the road's clear the rest of the way."

"Our Mr. Bostwick"

By
Kennett Harris

Author of "The Flood-tide of Fortune," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY
IRMA DÉRÈMEAUX



THERE'S many a man will work to his limit for the employer who feeds him on praise. That's the sort of chap Mr. Hiram Bostwick is. He takes his work as a great game, and he plays not only for the joy of winning but for the thrill of the applause. In this story he meets on one trip a foreman worthy his steel, a woman—and a disaster.

A DOOR swung open with a sharp impetus from the outside, and the somewhat gloomy premises of Metcalf & McCune's, wholesale hardware, were suddenly made bright by the radiant personality of Mr. Hiram Bostwick, the traveling salesman for the house. There were other salesmen who traveled, but he was *the* one. He had sold his first bill of goods for Metcalf & McCune's and had been with the firm continuously ever since, excepting for one brief desertion when, seduced by a princely salary, he had boomed Pomona Food Products the length and breadth of Indiana. The Pomona people, however, entertained the erroneous idea that the princely salary aforesaid was sufficient compensation for

Mr. Bostwick's efforts in their behalf. They little knew Hiram. Denied the grateful incense of admiration and appreciation that Metcalf & McCune's had always burned for him unstintedly, he had, in his own phrase, "blown up" and returned to his first allegiance.

Joe McCune, the active member of the firm, took his fingers from his rumpled shock of hair, raised his lank body from his swiveled desk-chair and shook hands with his valued employee. Having further testified to the regard in which he held Mr. Bostwick by the offer of his particular box of cigars, an offer graciously accepted, he took a slip of paper from his desk, leaned back and smiled the particular quizzical smile that he generally wore when talking to Hiram.

"'Once more into the breach,' Hi, eh?" he remarked.

"That's the idea," asserted Mr. Bostwick, with an appreciative grin. "Once more we go forth and do 'em up. I understand it's the wilds of Injany this time."

"Over your pure food route," Joe nodded. "The Swankey-Crewe Company's breaking into that territory. They've given it to Gashwilder. You know Gash? He's a good man. You'll have to hump yourself with him in the field. Hi."

Hiram Bostwick tilted his chair to an angle that allowed him to cock his eye comfortably at the ceiling. He blew a meditative thread of smoke upward. It was half a minute before he spoke.

"Joe," he said, "I'm worried about my right hand. This writer's cramp they talk about. I'm afraid of it, honest! Well, I guess I'll take the risk for this trip, but I'm going to ask for a lay-off when I get back, to learn stenography."

"I don't get you," said McCune.

"Labor-saving," explained Bostwick. "Time saver too. All the writing I have to do in my order book—oh, you were talking about Gashwilder. Yes, he's a good man. Better than most, perhaps, but good Lord, Joe! you aint seriously comparing him with me, are you?"

"'Pride goeth before a fall,'" misquoted McCune. "Some of these days you'll get an awful jar. Hiram. You remember I told you so, will you? Well, here's your list. You'll land 'em all, of course, but whatever you do, don't slip up on Gillespie at Tarentum. I want him the worst way. Good luck to you!"

Mr. Bostwick took the list, got up, and shook his finger impressively in his employer's face.

"Good luck, nothing!" he ejaculated. "Luck hasn't anything to do with it. It's brains, it's judgment, it's tact, it's persuasiveness—in a word, it's selling ability. That's what put me at the top. Don't insult me by talking about luck."

"I apologize," said McCune. "Pardon me, and go to 'em. Parn 'em up!"

"Them's my intentions," said Bostwick, confidently. "Tra-la!"

McCune gazed after the disappearing back of his star salesman with a curious expression on his face. "Hi's a mighty

good man," he muttered, "but—but—well, I rather wish somebody would give him just one jolt. I'd almost be willing to have Gashwilder do it."

By four o'clock that afternoon, Mr. Bostwick was exchanging greetings with two cordial officials at the station baggage office who almost fought in their eagerness to check his sample cases. At four-ten, he kissed a large, very stylishly attired and good looking lady, who had accompanied him, promised to behave himself, smoke in moderation, change to heavier underwear if the meteorological conditions demanded it—

"And take no bad money," supplemented Hiram. "Trust your noble husband, little one! He's as careful and prudent as he is good looking. So long, Hon!" He kissed her once more, picked up his suit-case and passed through the gates to his train.

At six o'clock, he inscribed his name with a flourish upon the Commercial Hotel register at Effingham and established warm, friendly relations with the proprietor before entering the dining-room. There he impressed the waitress so favorably that he got a tolerably decent supper, after which, he spent a busy hour and a half in the sample-room to which he had enticed one of the two hardware dealers in the town. Followed another hour pleasantly social in character, half an hour of clerical work, and eight hours of the refreshing sleep that should properly come to those who labor well.

He was up in the morning betimes, clean as a pink and dapper as a daisy, with energy tingling to his finger-tips and good-humor and self-satisfaction beaming from his countenance. He breakfasted with appetite and then sallied forth to interview his remaining customer without the least doubt that "customer" was the word applicable. The event justified his confidence and he closed his sample cases, whistling a gay operatic air, with superb technique and an expression of entire content.

"So you're leaving us," said the landlord, regretfully.

"For a time; but I'd hate to think I wasn't coming back," said Hiram.

"You'll have one consolation. From this on, you citizens of Effingham and the surrounding country will have knives and scissors that it will be a pleasure to own and a joy to use—all kinds of edge-tools that will hold their edge until the lowing herds wind homeward o'er the lea—whatever a lea is. For the first time in the history of your beautiful village, you will be able to purchase dependable hardware from your own merchants, and for this inestimable boon, you may thank Hiram Bostwick. I expect a brass band at the depot on my next visit."

"Let us know when you're coming and you shall have it, sure," promised the landlord. "We'll give you the best we've got, anyway."

The ten-fifteen was on time to the dot. Hiram swung lightly aboard the chair car, deposited his suit-case on a seat on the shady side and then strolled back to the smoking compartment. It was empty, and he felt a little disappointed, liking company; but in a few minutes, there entered a small, dark man with twinkling, beady eyes and considerable protuberance of the lower waistcoat buttons, who looked at him with recognition, some surprise and no immediate expression of pleasure.

"Come right in and make yourself at home, Mr. Gashwilder," invited Hiram pleasantly. "Hang up your hat. Shed your coat if you like. Don't stand on ceremony; sit down—anywhere."

"Why, seeing it's you, I believe I will," responded the newcomer, with sudden heartiness and a glimmer of gold under his disproportionately heavy mustache. "Mr. Bostwick, aint it? Met you in Kansas City, didn't I—or was it in St. Joe?"

"If you can afford to forget, I can," grinned Hiram, as the other seated himself. "Was it a pair of trays you held in the last hand, or was it deuces? Well, I'm glad to see you don't hold it up against me, anyway. I certainly did skin you. You were one mass of raw, quivering flesh—sore quivering flesh, I should say."

"I think if you trimmed me, I'd remember it," said Mr. Gashwilder, visibly nettled. "It aint often done, believe me. Let's see. You were with some little

jim-crow hardware concern then. I remember that. McCoy & Mooncalf, wasn't it?"

"Nearly right," agreed Hiram. "A little jim-crow concern, as you say. But I saw its possibilities and took hold of it and—well, if you were in the hardware line, you would know what Metcalfe & McCune's is to-day."

Mr. Gashwilder lit an oily, black little cigar. "Still with it?" he queried indifferently, between puffs.

"I left it for the Pure Food Products about three weeks ago," answered Hiram, truthfully.

"Groceries wasn't never your line before, was it?" asked Gashwilder.

"Anything's my line that's got merit to it," Bostwick replied, complacently. "You heard about that fellow that was sent to the West Indies with a consignment of warming pans, didn't you? He took the lids off and sold 'em for sugar skimmers. That was me. I am the original guy that sold the opera glasses to the blind asylum and unloaded an edition of Spike Doolan's Bartender's Guide on the National Temperance Association. I convinced 'em that it was their duty to familiarize themselves with the methods of the enemy. And you'll notice they've quit lumping plain and fancy drinks under the general title of 'rum' ever since."

"Good work," commented Mr. Gashwilder. "You got your start peddling oranges at a Clan na Gael picnic, didn't you?"

"About the time you were working off lemons on unsuspecting merchants—yes," Hiram assented. "Still in the lemon line, aint you?"

"I may hand one to some Wise Willie now and then," smiled Gashwilder. "So Metcalfe & McCune's hired you over again at double salary, did they?"

"You saw my sample cases at Effingham, so why ask?" said Bostwick. "Yes, my dear friend. I'm afraid I shall have to remove your hide once more. It's hard on you, but I can't help it."

"I should worry!" said the Swankey-Crewe representative.

"Made a good start at Effingham," remarked Hiram, after a short pause. "You overlooked a bet there."

"A good start often makes a bum finish," retorted Gashwilder. "I'm not stopping at water-tanks."

"Helps to get up steam," said Hiram. "I've got a full head on now."

"Nobody would ever guess it to hear you talk." Mr. Gashwilder removed his hat to wipe his bald head with his handkerchief. He smiled sarcastically.

"It's the part of a good salesman to suit his talk to his man," said Hiram. "I make a point of it."

"I've heard conversation that suited me better."

"Well, that may be, but however much you hate to, you've got to listen to the other fellow once in a while," said Hiram. "I admit you've got a musical voice and I understand you're a great story teller. Do you find it helps you to sell goods?"

"Want some points on selling goods?" inquired the other, suavely. "Well, perhaps I can give you one or two."

"I'd be tickled to death to get them," declared Hiram, cheerfully. "I know a good deal, but I never yet claimed to know it all and I never expect to meet up with a man who's too big a fool to teach me something if I can stand for his society long enough to find out what it is. Now, in return for your kind offer, let me give you a piece of good advice. Batignolles is my next stop. Yours too, probably, but you skip it and get in ahead of me. It's your only show. I'm a clean worker and the man who comes after me this trip will find a dreary waste of nothing doing. On the other hand, I'm the champion gleaner."

"You've been in luck with dub competition," the other remarked, wearily.

Hiram was enjoying himself. "Know Gillespie, the hardware magnate of Tarentum?" he asked. "He's the man I'm intending to stock up."

Gashwilder's heavy eyelids slowly unclosed. "Know him? Why yes, I know him," he answered. "Want to know where to find him?" He tapped the lower right hand pocket of his vest: "Right in here. That's where I keep him."

"He's safe as long as your vest is buttoned," grinned Hiram, with a glance at the tightly drawn garment. "I'd keep him some place I could get my finger

and thumb in, if I were you. Hello, here's Wilberville!"

The train ground to a stand-still, paused and proceeded, and the tête-à-tête was at an end. Into the smoking compartment came three men, two of the Brotherhood and a horsey layman. Mr. Gashwilder became instantly awake and, in a few minutes, had easily fraternized with the lively pickle salesman from Chicago and the Indianapolis cigar man. Mr. Bostwick became suddenly and strangely reticent.

"That reminds me—" prefaced Gashwilder.

He told a fairly good story, as smoking-room stories go. The pickle salesman and the cigar man were keenly appreciative. The horsey person became almost apoplectic with mirth. Hiram grinned. He noticed Gashwilder's expansion under the flattering tribute to his powers as a raconteur.

"And speaking of preachers—" continued Gashwilder.

This one was even more racy. The star of the Swankey-Crewe Company's selling force beamed with complacency at the hilarious close of it and glanced at Bostwick to see how he was taking it. Hiram was quite evidently impressed. He laughed a hollow laugh. Gashwilder was clearing his throat for another anecdotal gem when the pickle salesman, spurred to emulation, said, "Here's a good one I heard the other day. You fellows may have heard it, but—" He began.

He was not allowed to finish just then, however. In the first sentence, Gashwilder interrupted him with a perfectly innocent question. As he continued, the interruptions became more frequent and longer sustained and they had become undisguisedly "josh" in character. This species of baiting, humorously designed as a wholesome check upon the unduly prolix, can be made extremely diverting in more senses than one, if done artistically—diverting, that is, to everybody but the narrator of the story. Gashwilder considered himself an artist. His suggestions were so apparently spontaneous, his questions so guileless, his aspect so serious and his apologies so sincere that the cigar man and

the horsey person were in ecstasies of delight. Hiram, too, was pleased, though he seemed a trifle chagrined.

Presently Mr. Gashwilder tossed the end of his cigar away, arose and with a "See you later," left the smoker, favoring Hiram Bostwick with a peculiar look as he went.

"Cutie!" ejaculated the pickle salesman. Then he finished his story.

It may be said that Hiram Bostwick gave it his entire attention and generally came out of the shell of reserve that had seemed to encase him in Gashwilder's overshadowing presence. He had a line on Gash now.

The engine whistled for Batignolles. Hiram bade his new friends adieu. They were to proceed to Tarentum, but were sorry to lose him even for a few hours.

"We'll have a happy re-union to-night if you make that four-twenty," said the cigar man.

"Don't slip up on it," begged the pickle salesman. "Is your friend due there, too?"

"I guess he is, but I don't think he'll be in a frame of mind to be good company," replied Hiram, grimly. "I'll be there with the bells on. So long, boys!"

He hurried into the chair car for his suit-case. In the seat behind him, a young woman was jabbing pins into her hat preparatory to departure. Hiram noted, out of the corner of his eye, that she was what he would have called a classy brunette. As the train came to a stop, he was perfectly aware that she was close behind him. He descended from the car.



"Oh, I am in such pain! If you wouldn't mind . . . taking off my shoe. I'm a coward, I know, but I haven't the nerve to do it."

A "striking" brunette would have been a more apposite term. She struck him with all the force of her plump hundred-and-thirty pounds, screamed, clutched him around the neck and subsided limply, a dead weight in his arms.

"Oh!" she cried, in agonized accents. "I've twisted my ankle!"

Hiram held her firmly, but detached one hand from her support to feel for his scarf pin. It was a beautiful little pin of a ruby and brilliants and his wife's gift. He would have hated to lose it. It was in place, however, and so was his watch; so he allowed his sympathy to well.

"That's too bad, madam!" he said. "You'd better sit down, hadn't you? Think you can walk a few steps? Don't be afraid to lean on me."

She was not. Ten yards distant lay his sample cases. A hundred yards farther on at least, a baggage truck was wheeling other sample cases briskly in the direction of a waiting dray. Hiram could distinguish the moving figure of Mr. Gashwilder a little ahead of it. Just then the train started and the pickle salesman waved a smirking farewell from a window.

"I—I'll try it now," said the young woman, rather pitifully. "Very slowly, please."

Very slowly, indeed, Hiram covered the ten yards with his suffering charge and seated her on the lowest of his cases. "Now if you'll excuse me a moment or two, I'll go and get some help," he said.

"Oh, please!" cried the young woman, imploringly. "If you wouldn't mind. . . . Oh, I am in such pain! . . . If you wouldn't mind. . . . taking off my shoe. I'm a coward, I know, but I haven't the nerve to do it."

No more chivalrous heart than Hiram's ever beat, and he was gallant by nature—far from insensible to the attraction of a pretty foot in a snugly fitting silk stocking; but as he knelt to unlace the ribbon of the lady's neat shoe he was in no gallant humor. He performed his task gently and carefully, however, though the patient winced and cried out more than once.

"It doesn't seem badly swollen," Hiram remarked. He delicately touched

the ankle, pressing tentatively. "Does that hurt?"

Her indrawn breath answered the question. Hiram stroked the foot with an expert touch.

"That seems to ease it," said the young woman. "Oh, this is ever so kind of you and you can't think how sorry I am to put you to all this trouble."

"That's all right," said Mr. Bostwick. "I'll go now and see if I can get you a carriage. Back in a minute."

He ran down the deserted platform, passing the closed baggage room. Looking in at the open office window, he saw a lanky youth bending over the telegraph instrument, masticating gum.

"Son," hailed Bostwick, "there's a lady back here broken her leg getting off the train. How'd it be to hustle around and do something for her?"

The young man didn't answer immediately.

Then, as that had no effect, "Don't make me crawl through this window to get close enough to you to get your attention!"

There was something in Hiram's tone that made the young man raise his pale eyes.

"I can't leave the key now," he answered, shortly. "Is she hurt bad?" He craned his neck out of the window and looked up the platform. "Aw! what you givin' me?" he sneered. "She aint got no broken leg." He turned to his instrument.

Hiram hesitated for an instant, but he had no time to waste on manslaughter.

"Where's the baggageman?" he inquired, with perceptible restraint.

"Gone to dinner."

"Nobody around here but you?"

"No, but there's the 'phone if you want to come around and use it."

Mr. Bostwick took the short cut through the window. "What's the number of the livery?" he snapped.

"Name's Wotherspoon. It's in the book," replied the operator.

Bostwick fluttered the leaves to Wotherspoon and, in the course of five minutes, got the connection. Certainly Wotherspoon would hitch up a rig right away. Wouldn't take more than a few minutes. Run the dray? Sure. Supposed

the boy had brought up everything there was from the train. Something fishy about that. He'd break that boy's blamed neck. Yes, he'd be able to take one of the cases up to the hotel in the carriage. Right away.

Hiram looked at his watch. He had lost twenty-five precious minutes. He would probably lose ten or fifteen more, but he would gain little by abandoning this distressed damsel to the driver of the carriage and proceeding up-town afoot and with a weighty grip. He had two men to see. Well, he would land one of them for a rattling good order, and it would be hard if he couldn't make good his boast of being a good gleaner, granting that Gashwilder had got in ahead of him—if he had the time.

He went back to his charge, his sunny and confident self, and announced the approaching arrival of the carriage. The young woman's gratitude was touching. Yes, it was still hurting, but not so badly now. "I'll go to the hotel and bathe it in cold water," she said. "It may not be really a sprain after all."

In a little over the ten minutes, the carriage came, and Hiram, with the driver's assistance, conveyed her by easy stages to the vehicle and got in after her. "Now we'll soon be all right," said Mr. Bostwick, cheerfully, as the carriage rolled through the dust.

"I've been an awful bother to you," said the young woman, apologetically, "—and wasted your time."

"I've more time than money," Hiram assured her, genially. "I'm only too glad to have been of any assistance." She had nice eyes.

"I feel guilty just the same," she persisted.

Hiram felt justified in giving her hand a paternal and reassuring pat. "Now, see here, Miss—" he began.

"Mrs. Thatcher," she supplied. "But I know I have been a bother, Mr. Bostwick."

Hiram stared at her. "How did you know my name?" he asked.

"My brother-in-law, Mr. Gashwilder, pointed you out to me when you got on the train at Effingham," she answered, innocently. "He was in a hurry to transact some business here and left the train

ahead of me," she continued. "He'll be most grateful to you for what you have done, I'm sure."

Hiram was still staring. She smiled a little and slipped on her shoe as the carriage stopped at the hotel.

"Don't trouble to help me out," she said, sweetly. "My foot is ever so much better and I'm sure I can manage. Thank you again, so much, Mr. Bostwick."

She jumped from the carriage with the spring of a doe, tripped past the open-mouthed driver and into the hotel.

"What in—!" began the driver.

"Know Jones & Harmer's?" interrupted Hiram, sharply. "All right. Drive around there lively. Hit 'er up, Bill. No time to waste."

In three minutes or less, Mr. Bostwick was in Jones & Harmer's store. In another minute, he was out again. Mr. Jones and Mr. Harmer were both at dinner. Back at about one o'clock most likely. Maybe half-past one. Couldn't say whether any pot-bellied gentleman with a black mustache and gold-filled front teeth had called or not. He, the informant, only got in with the wagon just before Mr. Harmer left.

"Billiter's next," Hiram directed.

Billiter's was two blocks down the main street. Mr. Billiter had likewise gone to dinner. The tinsmith, who was in charge, said he didn't believe any other drummer had been in. His stock was running low. Yes, it certainly was. About out of galvanized iron. Needed some zinc, too. He'd been at the old man about it for a week.

"We'll 'phone him at his house," decided Hiram. He did so. A woman's voice informed him that Mr. Billiter had not yet arrived from the store.

"Gash has got him," reflected Hiram. "Well, we'll try Harmer now."

He got Mr. Harmer on the wire, but Mr. Harmer left the buying to Mr. Jones. Where was Jones? Probably up at his house. No, he had seen nothing of the Swankey-Crewe salesman.

Hope revived in Hiram's breast. He found Mr. Jones' telephone and called. Again a female voice. Mr. Jones had just that minute left. "Yes, for the store, I suppose. I don't know where else."

Back to Jones & Harmer's went the carriage. There Hiram unloaded his small sample case, opened it up and waited. At the end of half an hour Mr. Jones had not arrived. Presently Harmer came. He was son-in-law to Jones. A nice fellow, and Hiram made a friend of him—a lifelong friend—but he was decidedly a junior partner. "You'll have to wait for Jones, old man," he said.

"I'll take a saunter up to the hotel and get a bite," said Mr. Bostwick. "Have him hold his order till I've seen him."

"I'll gag him, if necessary," Harmer promised, and on this assurance, Hiram went to the hotel to find that Mr. Gashwilder was in the sample room with Mr. Jones.

"Fix you up something if you want to risk it, but the dining-room has been closed more than half an hour ago," said the clerk.

"I guess I won't take the time now," said Hiram.

He went back to Billiter's and found his friend, the tinsmith, still in sole charge.

"Billiter's just been a-telephonin' down," the tinsmith stated. "He wanted to know who it was wanted him and when I told him, he said for me to tell you he give the Swankey-Crewe man his order for all he needed. He's gone out in the country to look at a farm he's thinking of buying and he won't be back this afternoon."

"Too bad!" said Hiram, with mild regret. "I'm sorry, for his sake. Well, tell him I'll see him on my next trip. Have a cigar."

Half a chance yet! Back to Jones & Harmer's.

"Tommy," he said to Mr. Harmer, "I just heard that your daddy-in-law is in dire peril, and only you can rescue him from imminent disaster. Take down that 'phone and call him at the hotel. He's in the sample room at the mercy of the fiend Gashwilder. Tell him I'm here and not to decide on anything until he's seen me. Ten minutes earnest conversation is all I ask and five minutes inspection of that case. Hurry, boy! Heaven knows what may be happening while you dally."

Harmer grinned. "I'll do it," he said,

"but the old man's a bit of a crank and—oh, all right."

He called the hotel. After a few minutes, he communicated to his senior partner the gist of Mr. Bostwick's instruction. Then he hung up the receiver and turned to Hiram with a sheepish expression.

"I was kind of afraid of that," he observed. "He told me to go to the dickens and teach my grandmother to suck eggs. He hasn't been in the business thirty-five years without knowing what he wants and where to buy it. Mighty sorry! But you bet I'll have him in shape to do business by the time you get around again."

"Blessings on you!" exclaimed Hiram. "I'll come early and stay late; but now duty calls me and I must go."

He closed the sample case and, after telephoning for the dray to bear it back to the station, went out jauntily. He had walked nearly two blocks before the bitterness of his soul burst forth in one agonized exclamation.

"Skunked!"

He, Hiram Bostwick, skunked! Fooled, jockeyed, conned, an object for the finger of scorn, a subject for the cackling laughter of fools, a butt for their clumsily fashioned shafts of would-be wit, a new story for Gashwilder!

It was characteristic of Bostwick that from the moment when the malingering Mrs. Thatcher had disappeared, he had dismissed her and her ankle from his mind, concentrating on the situation as it existed without reference to its cause. Now, having done all that in him lay, he considered from the beginning the combination of circumstances that had been his undoing. Certainly he had every excuse, but excuses were not what he was paid for. He was paid to get orders, and positively for the first time in his career, he had failed absolutely. His humiliation was profound. His shoulders actually hunched until, arriving at the station, a thought occurred to him.

"The operator!"

He looked at his watch as he straightened himself. His stubby red mustache bristled and his gray eyes gleamed. He walked briskly to the office window. A grizzled, elderly man, in a uniform cap,

peered at him inquiringly through steel-rimmed spectacles.

"I was looking for a fine, handsome, intelligent young fellow with a polite manner and an obliging disposition," explained Hiram. "He was holding down the office here a little before noon. I'd like to see him!"

The agent smiled benevolently. "He'll be on at about six o'clock," he said. "Anything I can do?"

"You might kick him a few times for

or two—or telling his story. Skunked!

Outwardly he was as joyous and aggressive as ever when he boarded the four-twenty. Gashwilder, as he seated himself and ostentatiously turned the well-filled leaves of his order book, was a little disappointed as he encountered the Bostwick grin. He grinned himself, however, and crossed the aisle to where Hiram sat.

"Didn't see you come in," he said, with offensive cordiality. "I thought



"I haven't the least idea what you mean," smirked Gashwilder.

me, but I don't suppose you will," Hiram replied. He turned sadly away. "Stung again?" he sighed, and resumed his gloomy meditations.

What would Joe McCune say?

Only one thing to do: to make the rest of the trip a record for sales—land the pivotal Gillespie, of Tarentum, for a corker and burn 'em up all along the rest of the route. But that would not alter the fact that he had been skunked. And he could hardly prevent Gashwilder from getting his jackal's bone

maybe you'd stayed to gather up what I might have thoughtlessly overlooked. By the way, I've got to thank you for your kindness to my sister-in-law. She hoped to see you again herself but her friends called for her and she couldn't wait. But I am much obliged to you. Put you out much?"

Hiram laughed, without a false note—a bubbling, good natured laugh. "I've got to hand it to you, Gashwilder," he admitted. "You and the lady put it all over me. I don't know but you might

have saved her a good deal of trouble and time if you'd have sandbagged me and thrown me out of the car window, but probably that would have struck you as a little coarse."

"I haven't the least idea what you mean," smirked Gashwilder.

"Foxy!" chuckled Bostwick. "You'll do, Gashwilder. I own up that I underestimated you. I'd feel a little nervous getting into a poker game with you now."

Mr. Gashwilder eyed his rival suspiciously, but Hiram's admiration seemed perfectly sincere. Evidently this Bostwick person was a good loser and could respect ability, even in an opponent. The Swankey-Crewe representative eased his grip on his struggling vanity.

"Oh, well," he said, "I aint bragging of myself and I make no cracks about getting people's hides, but once in a while you'll notice a green pelt on my backyard fence."

"Aw! don't rub it in," begged Hiram, shamefacedly.

Mr. Gashwilder smiled triumphantly and re-opened his order book.

"Well, if you're going to do that, I'll leave," said Hiram, getting up. "By the way, I notice you haven't any padlock on that vest pocket. It wont do to be careless with me now, you know."

"Haven't I?" Gashwilder snickered. "Don't you think it. I got him by long distance and made my appointment with him for this evening."

"Blame you! you think of everything!" exclaimed Hiram, with an annoyed air, and thereupon he left Mr. Gashwilder in a very complacent frame of mind.

It was an hour's run to Tarentum. By that time, Mr. Bostwick had entirely regained his poise and confidence. For one thing, he would be among friends. During his recent brief connection with the Pomona Food Products company, he had made Tarentum. The colored bus driver greeted him effusively.

"Drop me off at Gillespie's hardware and take my suit-case on up to the hotel, Sam," he told the ebon functionary.

He caught Gashwilder's sarcastic smile. "It's because I'm nervous," he explained. "I can't help it."

"Go ahead," Gashwilder encouraged.

Hiram took him at his word and got out when the bus stopped. It was a large store, Gillespie's, even for a flourishing town like Tarentum. Mr. Gillespie had absorbed three competing establishments and conducted his monopoly with business-like moderation ever since. Mr. Gillespie was in. A shrewd-looking old monopolist with a cold, keen eye and a remarkably reticent mouth. Hiram took his measure with unerring exactness, and spoke with nicely calculated conciseness and no breeziness whatever.

"Good evening, sir," he said. "I'm from Metcalfe & McCune's—Bostwick. I suppose my firm wrote that I would call on you to-day. I stopped on my way to the hotel to ask when it would be convenient for you to see what I have to offer."

Mr. Gillespie's cold, keen eyes appraised Mr. Bostwick. "I've an appointment at eight o'clock to-night," he said. "If you call here at half past, I'll talk with you."

"Thank you," said Hiram. "I'll be here at half past eight. Good evening."

He turned to go.

"If you've any samples to show me, send 'em here," said the hardware man.

"I'll send 'em at once," said Hiram.

He left the well-appointed store, smiling to himself. He knew when he had made a good impression. He had a sixth sense for it. A few minutes later, he was shaking hands with the landlord, with the clerk, with the porter and the barkeeper. There was nothing undemocratic about Hiram. Then, pending the opening of the dining-room doors, he went into the writing-room and clasped the outstretched hands of the pickle salesman and the cigar drummer in renewal of old acquaintance. The pickle salesman was facetious concerning public embraces of responsive "skirts."

"I'll buy," promised Hiram. "It's on me, but there's only one man here present who knows how bad it was on me, and he's too good a fellow to tell."

Mr. Gashwilder, who was also present, chuckled. "I didn't make any promises," he declared. "I guess I'll have to tell it."

He was beginning, but was inter-

rupted by the announcement of supper. He resumed his relation at the table and finished in dead silence.

"I'll bite," observed the pickle salesman, after an awkward pause. "Where did the joke come in?"

"Smoke up!" reproved Hiram. "The joke was, I didn't get to sell as much as an egg beater. Some joke!"

"I suppose it's all right," said the pickle salesman. "Ha, ha!" He laughed in two hollow syllables and the cigar drummer echoed him. Gashwilder was piqued, but not discouraged, and upon adjournment to the billard-smoking room, he exerted his social charm to the utmost and with apparent success. Now, as earlier in the day, Hiram took the rôle of listener as Gashwilder expanded. Nothing could have been more hearty and spontaneous than his laughter. Gashwilder began to entertain an almost kindly feeling for his defeated and humiliated competitor.

Presently there came from the adjoining bar-room the sound of a curious, droning bass voice. There was something particularly ludicrous in the tone of it, and everyone smiled as he listened. Hiram Bostwick's face lighted. Then he began to chuckle.

"What is it?" inquired the cigar man.

Hiram continued to chuckle. "It's Muley-cow Meeker, I think," he replied. "I heard him when I was here before. He's got a story about a muley cow you ought to hear. Greatest old jay! We ought to get him in here and let Mr. Gashwilder rag him."

Gashwilder, pleased with the suggestion, looked at his watch. "I've got an appointment at eight it wouldn't do for me to miss," he remarked, with a grin at Bostwick. "Well, I've half an hour to spare, anyway. Anything for the general good."

Hiram got up leisurely and left the room. In a moment or two, the bass drone ceased and he reappeared, ushering in a ragged, shambling, raw-boned giant of a man, with a long, gray-streaked beard, a glazed stare and a drooping lower lip.

"Gentlemen, this is Mr. Jake Meeker," Hiram announced. "Mr. Meeker, these gentlemen are great story tellers, Mr.

Gashwilder in particular; but there isn't one of 'em has got a yarn to equal that muley cow story of yours. I was just trying to recall it, but I can't tell it the way you do. You tell it."

"Shucks! you don't want to hear that," drawled Mr. Meeker, with a gratified contortion of his face.

"Sure we do," urged Gashwilder, heartily.

"Well," said Mr. Meeker, "it was this way: There was a man, name o' Hockley, over in Saline County, Mizzoura, where I came from, an' this here Hockley had a herd o' muley cattle that he—"

"Excuse me," interrupted Gashwilder, winking aside. "I'm from Missouri, myself, and I'd like to shake your hand if you'll allow me. Grand little old state, Missouri is. When it comes to corn and hogs, mules and democrats—but I'm breaking in on your story. You were saying—"

"This here Hockley I'm telling you about, had a herd of muley cattle. Not this here de-horned stock, but sure-enough born an' bred—"

"Speaking of muley cows reminds me of an uncle of mine that used to live over in Holt," said Mr. Gashwilder. "He had a cow—I wouldn't be sure that it was a muley cow—more likely one of the common barnyard variety with horns. A cow doesn't look natural to me without horns, anyway. This cow of my uncle's—I beg your pardon, though. I'm interrupting you. You were saying that Mr. Hockley—"

"Had a herd of muley cows," Meeker resumed. "They was new down in our part of the country and a right smart of folks—"

"Come to think of it, it was in Atchison County my uncle lived," said Gashwilder. "Excuse me, Mr. Meeker. Go on."

Mr. Meeker stared at him with lack-luster eyes for a moment. The pickle salesman tittered and coughed.

"As I was a-sayin', a right smart o' folks was kind o' cur'ous about them cattle, an' a feller by the name o' Andy Traut that was a-sparkin' his daughter, Mirandy—"

"Pretty name, Mirandy," commented Gashwilder. "I had a girl of that name

once. Her father was a druggist and she used to dip into the stock when he wasn't around. One day, the old man got in a dozen boxes of fancy toilet soap from—Here! What—"

It was Mr. Meeker who interrupted that time. Reaching out a pair of monstrous, hairy hands, he clutched Mr. Gashwilder in a vise-like grip, lifted him like an infant and slammed him violently down on the billiard table.

"You durned little whiffet!" he rumbled, his dull eyes blazing into insane wrath. "Will you shet your fool mouth? I'm talkin' now an' you're lis'nin'. Set down thar an' don't you move an inch or let out a whisper till I'm through, or I'll ram this cue down your throat."

He picked up a cue that was lying on the table and shook it in Mr. Gashwilder's ashen face.

"It really isn't polite to butt in on a man's story the way you've been doing, Mr. Gashwilder," said Hiram, with mild reproach.

"Fierce!" agreed the pickle salesman, shaking his head. "You asked for the story. Why not listen to it like a gentleman?"

"Sure," agreed the cigar man. "Go on, Mr. Meeker. We're interested."

"You move an inch or let out a whisper!" repeated Mr. Meeker, glaring at Gashwilder and menacingly shaking the cue again. "Well, as I was a-sayin', this yere Hockley I was a-tellin' you about, he got this yere herd of muley cows..."

The maniac's voice sank from its roar to the droning bass they had first heard, but his eyes retained their *Ancient Mariner* glitter and he kept the cue in constant agitation within a few inches of his victim's nose. On and on he drawled with infinite wealth of detail and circumstances, harking back for some forgotten triviality, diverging, digressing, driving interminably. Mr. Gashwilder regarded him with the fixed gaze of a fascinated bird.

Hiram rose quietly and moved unobtrusively to the doorway, where he beckoned to the other two, who gleefully tip-toed after him without attracting Mr. Meeker's attention.

"Five minutes past eight," whispered Hiram. "I've a particular appointment

with a mighty particular man at half past. I understand that story takes anywhere from an hour to an hour and a half, so I won't have time to hear the finish. I think it would be well for you boys to go back and see that nobody busts up the séance and gets the old man irritated. I wouldn't like anything to happen to Gash."

A train went out of Tarentum at eleven-twenty-five. It bore Hiram Bostwick, his sample cases and his order book. In the last appeared a long list of items and figures, a list that Mr. Bostwick scanned again and again with more than satisfaction.

"It aint true!" he chuckled. "Don't tell me he loosened up to that extent! Not on a first order to a new house. I don't believe it! Don't tell me you whipsawed the great Gash and obliged him to stay over-night to explain matters. Not Gashwilder! Well, leave him something as you go along, poor devil! What, you wont? You remorseless wretch! Be ashamed of yourself!"

He shook his right hand, and then regarded the fingers.

"Writer's cramp," he grinned. "Oh, you Hiram!"

That he went along the rest of his route like a devouring flame, or to use his own favorite simile, a vacuum cleaner; that he kept the wires hot with congratulatory telegrams to the house, having beaten his own Pomona Pure Food products record, may be merely mentioned. In ten days he was back in Joe McCune's office.

"But you did get skunked. Hi," Joe reminded him.

"That was just a case of luck," Mr. Bostwick said. "Just mean, pizen luck. Might have happened to anybody. But mark you, boy, how I rose superior to it. Note the Machiavellian diplomacy that followed, the fine calculation, the recognition of opportunity, the prompt grab at it, the tenacious clutch, the—"

"Luck," supplied McCune. "Did you tell the Madam about it?"

"How that son-of-a-gun got a man to pretend he had an epileptic fit on the platform?" said Hiram. "Yes, I told her that, Joe."

If the children were no more
We should dread the desert be-
hind us
Worse than the dark before.
—Longfellow's "Children."

The Desert Behind Us

By Grant Owen

THE gentleman in the stained overalls, who was so deftly manipulating the long-handled paste-brush as he plastered the board fence with the multi-colored posters, was a very ordinary human mortal. You would have known that, by the heavy dullness of his red features, by his lack of enthusiasm for his work despite all his deftness, by the over prominent protuberance of his left cheek, denoting rather more chewing tobacco than was good for him at one time, and by the ingenious and crinkling oaths he shot forth venomously whenever by some infrequent mischance one of the posters he lifted up with his long brush became twisted.

But to Buddy Holmes and Sadie Page, watching those wonderful posters unfolding along the length of the fence, the masterful gentleman who plastered them there was something far more than merely human or mortal. To their eager eyes, as they followed his every move with their small noses thrust as far through the interstices of the fence as the iron pickets would allow, he was a radiant, wholly wonderful being, possessed of a seven-fold halo, or something very much like it.

You see, the brush-wielding, tobacco-chewing, rather profane gentleman just across the street was posting the advance bills of a celebrated circus, which would come to town some two weeks hence.

Behind those two absorbed onlookers, on the wide grounds of the Corliss

Foundation Home For Children, many little noisy groups were engaged in as many noisy games. Buddy, being disinclined to strenuous exercise for the time being,—by reason of too many over-ripe bananas, which a well-meaning but undiscerning push-cart man had passed him through the fence the day before,—and Sadie, having an equal aversion to the noisy games,—because of a twisted and very painful ankle which had resulted from an attempt of hers two days since to climb to the top of one of the grape arbors,—the two had wandered thither together to become the sole discoverers of this superman with the paste-brush.

"Oh-h!" breathed Buddy ecstatically, as the latest poster to flower on the fence disclosed a smiling lady in pink tights poised on her toes like a ballet-dancer on the back of a snow-white horse. "I seen that when I went; only there was four of 'em a-doin' it all to onct."

"You've been, then?" asked Sadie.

"Sure! Aint you?" said he.

Sadie bobbed her head. It was a flaxen head with the tow-like hair braided into an odd little pig-tail.

"Last year, with my uncle, just before he went and got killed in the freight-yards, I liked the clowns best. There was three of 'em, an' one of 'em had a big sorter ball-thing on a string on a stick that he kep' a-whackin' the others with when they wa'n't lookin'."

"You don't get took to it from here, do you?" inquired Buddy, whose residence

at the Home had been somewhat more brief than Sadie's.

"Naw," said she, not without a certain sadness. Then she brightened. "But last year when it come they took us all down to Seaver Street and let us see the p'rade go past."

"That aint like goin' to the grounds," said Buddy sagely, "and into the tents where there aint none of the animal cages with their sides up and where the clowns does more than jest ride little donkeys."

A bell tinkled from the colonial porch of the big brick building behind the trees. The noise of the many games died away. The two at the fence turned reluctantly away, for the alluring gentleman was just smoothing out with his brush a highly colored lithograph, depicting a jungle populated with strange beasts—some of them very strange beasts, indeed.

"Gee! I wisht I was goin' to get took this year," said Buddy, slowly shaking his red head with its pale little freckle-covered face. He was seven and small for his years.

Sadie, one year his senior in age, many years his senior in a certain shrewd keenness of observation, merely sniffed, wrinkling her thin nose unbecomingly as she did so.

"Well, you wont git took," she remarked, "unless some one comes along and adopts you. There's always kids git-tin' adopted outa here, and maybe you might possibly be one of 'em, and that whoever adopted you would take you to the circus. That's the only way you'd ever git to see it."

She spoke with a certain weary patience, as if she were fully aware of the length of the odds against such a course.

Buddy stopped short. He cast a wistful glance over his shoulder at that board fence beyond the iron fence which enclosed the grounds of the Home.

"I kin tell you one thing," said he with much emphasis. "There aint no one goin' to adopt me until they promises to take me to circuses."

"Nor me neither," said his companion, her air of weary wisdom suddenly dropping from her.

The bell tinkled again, rather ur-

gently, it seemed. They hastened their steps, Sadie progressing at an odd little hop by reason of the twisted ankle.

The gentleman across the street swore volubly because a gorgeous representation of a chariot race had torn across the middle as he swept his brush over it.

At the precise moment Sadie Page and Buddy Holmes were exchanging vows as they quickened their steps across the lawn of the Corliss Foundation Home, Elton Darrell in a very different quarter of the city pushed back his chair from the breakfast table and picked up the paper he had been trying to read with his second cup of coffee. Behind the big silver coffee-urn Mrs. Darrell glanced at him rather anxiously. She knew her husband disliked disturbances at this hour, and it certainly was a disturbance that was taking place next door. The two Lindley children, Madge and Bob, were whooping their young lungs out. The cause of this joy on their part was nothing less than an ornate advertising wagon, bearing on its sides the flaring posters of the coming circus.

Darrel was a thin-faced, nervous little man, with an abundance of nervous energy even at sixty. You knew from a glance that Elton Darrell was one of those men who must have material success to be satisfied. That he had gained it, a glance about the sunny dining-room, near the bow-window of which the breakfast table was spread, attested. The place breathed of money; so did Mr. Darrell's dapper person; so did the fingers of Mrs. Darrell's hands.

But the marks of the struggles that had brought them to this state were upon the faces of both of them. Mrs. Darrell, too, had not been without her ambitions. And in those early bitter years she too, as well as her husband, had worked and saved and denied. It had been a long and a bitter fight, from nothing to what they were now. She had come to wonder often, of late, what it all amounted to—if it had been in any way worth it, if the rewards equaled the sacrifices.

The childish voices next door grew in volume. Darrell clutched the paper and turned away.

"I imagine it's well we never have had

any of our own," said Mrs. Darrell. "They annoy you frightfully, don't they, dear?"

Darrell muttered something rather incoherent and left the room; she heard him going upstairs. She waited until a door closed—closed with irritable vehemence, she thought. Then, with a face transformed, a face tender, wistful, shining, she drew back the sash curtains of the bow-window and looked across to the house next door.

Marvin Lindley, an immaculate man in the early forties, with a certain calm dignity and assurance in his bearing, was just going down the red-flagged walk to the gate, where the limousine waited to whisk him into town. The advertising wagon was just appearing around a neighboring corner.

Mrs. Darrell heard the scamper of little feet on the walk. Forthwith Madge and Bob fell upon the man coming down the walk.

"The circus is coming," shrilled the boy.

He was red-headed and freckled; also his nose was delightfully uptilted.

"The circus is coming," chorused Madge with him. "You'll take us to it, wont you, Daddy? Wont you, Daddy? Promise, Daddy! We wont leggo you till you promise!"

"You young Black-handers!" laughed Lindley, grinning proudly down at them. "What on earth ever put the idea into your silly heads that I'd take you to a circus?"

"You always do!" said Bob promptly.

"Oh, well," said Lindley, plainly foreseeing the effect of his words. "I shall be so busy this year I'll send Ellen with you!"

Wild remonstrances greeted this assertion. Lindley grinned the more broadly and proudly.

"You gotta take us! You gotta take us!" came the protesting chorus.

Lindley threw up his hands in a gesture of helplessness.

"I have, have I? And nobody else will do, hey? Well, of course it's just as you say. Unhand me now, you young villains. Yes, it's a promise."

He stopped to gather the two in his arms and receive their very noisy and

very ardent caresses. They stood at the front gate as the limousine rolled away, and the shrill whoops might have been taken for something in the nature of a cheer as he leaned out the window to wave a hand back to them.

Behind the sash curtains, Mrs. Darrell was nervously fingering the expensive lace on her expensive morning gown; and she was saying, over and over, "Oh! Oh!" as if something were hurting her. Also a film had suddenly blinded her eyes, so that she could not see the two yelling children standing there at the Lindley gate.

Nor could she know that in a room upstairs Elton Darrell, too, had watched the little scene, that he was twisting the morning paper in his hands until the pages tore, and making funny little throaty sounds while his Adam's apple went up and down rapidly in that lean throat of his. Nor yet could she know of the many other mornings he had been similarly engaged at that window when she supposed he had gone upstairs to get away from the children's shrill voices that he might read his paper in quiet.

Mrs. Darrell thought it all out very carefully after her husband had gone in town that morning. She thought it was a sudden impulse—or perhaps more an inspiration. The truth of the matter was that the thing had been slowly crystallizing in her mind for months, even years. Every last detail she planned, and then summoned the car. A half hour later she was sitting with the matron of the Corliss Foundation Home.

"A little girl," the matron was repeating with a rising inflection, "about eight years old, you say, with light hair and blue eyes? Why yes, I think we have such a child, Mrs. Darrell."

Mrs. Darrell fidgeted in her chair.

"I wish all this to be strictly confidential," said she. "Mr. Darrell—er—you see children annoy him so. We've been so bound up in our own success and—"

The matron nodded and smiled understandingly. Mrs. Darrell was grateful to her for that. The explanations had been harder than she thought.

"The child will live with my cousin,

"Mrs. Holt," Mrs. Darrell went on. "But I shall be there much with her, and I shall do everything in the world for her."

So it happened that a little later, Sadie Page, her ridiculous little pig-tail switching about excitedly, was ushered into the sunny reception-room and left to talk with Mrs. Darrell. It was a very satisfactory talk, on the whole, for both parties; but at the climax of it all Sadie did not forget certain of her vows.

"If—if I come to live with you and be your little girl," she questioned, "will you take me to—the circus?"

"Take you to the circus?" laughed Mrs. Darrell. "Why, you dear child, it was wanting to take a little girl to the circus that really brought me here to-day. Take you? Of course I will."

In the private office of the Darrell Box Company, Elton Darrell had been pacing restlessly to and fro for some time. The usual sheaf of important letters, garnered from the morning mail and awaiting his attention, lay untouched on his desk.

Presently, with the air of a man whose mind is at last made up on some knotty problem, he caught up the telephone.

"This you, Holton?" he asked when the number he had requested had been given him. "Say, can you drop over here sometime this morning? Now?—Why, yes, if it isn't too much inconvenience to you. All right; that'll be good of you."

Some few minutes later, a youngish, athletic-looking chap entered the private office.

"Holt," said Darrell, "you're one of the trustees of the Corliss Foundation Home For Children, aren't you? Well, I want to adopt a boy. Don't laugh. I'm terribly in earnest. You know what I'd do for any little chap I took. I want a red-headed, freckled boy, about seven or so."

"I—er—the conditions are a little peculiar. Mrs. Darrell doesn't like children. I think they disturb her dreadfully. You see, Holt," he went on rather uneasily, "we were both so anxious for success, for position in the world, we rather lost sight of children and—and

what they would mean to us. I shall let the little chap live with my sister; but I shall be with him a great deal, and I'm the one that's going to adopt him. I think you know the advantages that will come to him without my mentioning them. Have you got a little chap anything like that at the Home?"

So it happened that at three o'clock that afternoon Buddy Holmes, redolent of soap, his hair shinily plastered to his small scalp, was led by the grinning Holt into Darrell's private office.

But, like Sadie Page, Buddy Holmes was no revoker of his vows. At the end of a wholly pleasing conversation with Mr. Darrell, he squirmed about in the chair beside the desk. Plainly he had something on his mind.

"Would you blow me to the circuses that come to town?" asked Buddy Holmes with almost agonized eagerness.

The first afternoon performance of the Consolidated Shows was over. The crowd was worming its way from the circus grounds. The little girl with the tow-colored pig-tail beside Mrs. Darrell suddenly craned her skinny neck and glanced ahead. A moment later her shrill voice was raised piercingly.

"Buddy! Oh, Buddy!" she squealed ecstatically to some one in the crowd ahead.

Mrs. Darrell was aware that a small, red-headed, freckled boy was pushing his way back through the crowd towards them.

"Oh you Sadie!" he cried in tones as shrill as her own, as he finally managed to reach them.

"So you got took?" she inquired. "Did you see the five clowns? Wasn't they the best ever?"

"And the bareback riders—six of 'em on white horses ridin' all to onct," he gloated. "Say—"

A man came elbowing his way after the boy. He laughingly took his charge by the hand. Then he looked up. Mrs. Darrell gasped. So did the man.

"Why—why—Ida—" He was staring first at her, and then at the little girl with the absurd pig-tail.

"Elton—the little boy—whose is it?" she demanded.



"Gee! I wish I was a grocer!"

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"Mine," said he. "I've adopted him. I took him from the Corliss Home. I—I—thought he'd annoy you so I had Mary take him and—"

She was laughing, but there were tears in her eyes.

"From the Corliss Home?" she repeated. "Why, that's where I got the little girl. I adopted her—and I was so afraid she'd trouble you that I didn't dare bring her home. I left her with Cousin Emily, and I've been going there every day to see her."

He looked at her as if he had never really known her before. He looked also as if he wished they were alone somewhere for just that minute.

Hand in hand just ahead of them

Buddy Holmes and Sadie Page were shrilly living over all the recent glories within the tent.

"They sha'n't go to your sister's nor to my cousin's again," said Mrs. Darrell.

"You bet they won't," he agreed. "We'll take them home—both of them. I've always thought what a bully playroom that big place at the top of the house would make for some kids—if we only had 'em."

He felt her hand clutch his arm and tighten on it.

"Have you really thought of that, Elton?" she cried with a sudden catch in her voice. "Have you really? Why, I've spent hours and hours up there, thinking—well, just that same thing."

The MAGNIFICENT BRUTE

By Hapsburg Liebe

HE was a prodigious example of atavism. His careful rearing, his schooling by private teachers, and later the years at a great college, had covered him with but a thin veneer. He was still primitive; he still belonged to the wildernesses and the club with a head of stone. He had a temper beyond control, and it had made trouble for him, it seemed, all his life. As a boy he had fought continually; he had fought his first teachers and his last—he had even fought one of his professors at Yale.

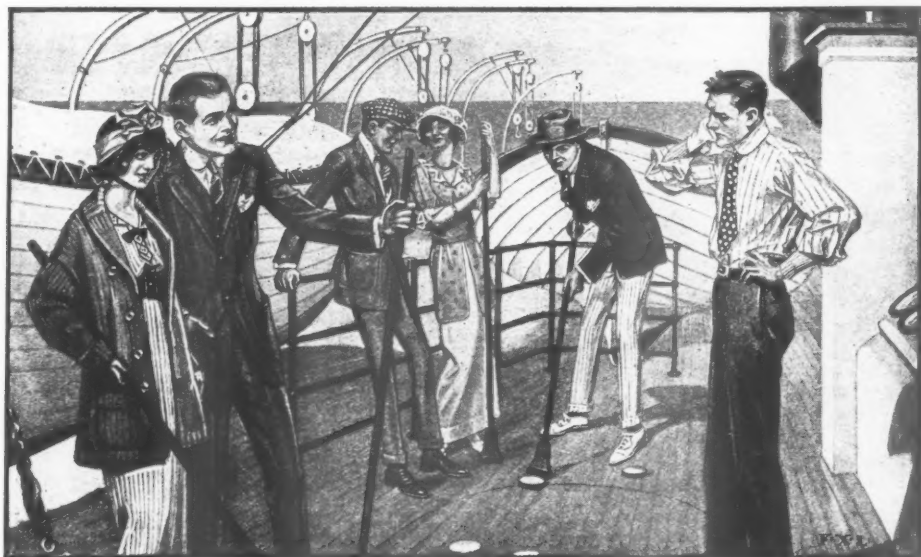
His father had over and over again predicted, "Some day you'll kill a man!" until the son looked forward to that event as a strange and mysterious and necessary climax to his life in the common walks of men.

At twenty-two, for no reason whatever, he joined the army, a regiment that was being made up for service in the

Philippines. Three months later, Matthew Addison found himself with a company doing garrison duty at the town of Santa Fe.

It followed so closely upon the deaths of the first sergeant, the second lieutenant, and the first lieutenant, that to some there seemed to be an uncanny connection. The three deaths had occurred with only a day and a night between each one; each of the three American officers had been found stark and white, with the hole of an almost unbelievably small steel-jacketed bullet through his head.

In a big house of wood and plaster and stone, which had wide and comfortable verandas and roof gardens and a patio filled with blooming things, and which stood on the brow of a low hill that overlooked Santa Fe, there lived an elderly Spaniard, Don Enrique Sanquebel, and his grown daughter Con-



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suela. They had been wealthy, owning vast fields of rice and of sugar-cane and of tobacco; but the Filipinos, that the insurgent army might be fed, had worked a perfect devastation, and the Sanquebels were hard put. Don Enrique seemed very kindly disposed toward the Americans; the commissioned officers had dined at his house; he himself had helped to lay out and dress for the last time the three unfortunates who had fallen at the hands of an unknown assassin.

With monetary assistance for himself in view, of course, the Don was very earnestly trying to wed his beautiful daughter Consuela to one Teodoro Velez, a tobacco merchant with headquarters in Manila. And of course Consuela, being a woman, did not wish to ally the forces of her life with those of some one of her parent's choosing. She cordially disliked the sallow and oily Teodoro, full-blooded Spaniard from Barcelona though he was.

Velez had come in state aboard one of his little trading schooners to visit the Don and his daughter, and he was pressing his suit most vigorously—the fawning way, the wrong way. In the evening following his arrival, the couple walked toward the water-front, with Consuela observing proper care to prevent her amorous escort from taking her by the arm. They passed a group of American soldiers. One of these, a man named Oscar Knott, a man as big and as broad and almost as strong as the Viking-like Addison, decided on an impulse that he would take advantage of the couple's ignorance of English. He rasped out plainly, in a breath reeking and poisonous with the fumes of white *rimo*:

"Well, by George, look at that!"

Matthew Addison was there. He saw the young woman's dark face flame suddenly crimson. It was but natural to conclude that she thought the language of Oscar Knott of even worse import than it really was. Addison looked quickly toward her. He held her eyes for a brief moment; they were distinctly Spanish and splendid, as was every part of her every feature, and they sent to his soul a great appeal.

"You—you hound!"

And Addison clenched a fist as brown as the sand under his feet and as hard as iron, and crashed it to the loose jaw of the *rimo*-soaked wretch in a blow like that a pile-driver gives. As Knott fell, Addison's face lost every drop of its blood. It became terrible in its wrath. The other soldiers stood back, astounded, afraid, bewildered at the sudden violence of the pariah. With a strange cry, a cry a thousand years old, Addison sprang down upon the inert figure of Knott and caught the pallid throat in both his great hands, muttering, muttering unintelligibly.

A hand was placed lightly on his shoulder, and the touch was magic, like the thrill of electricity.

"Don't!"

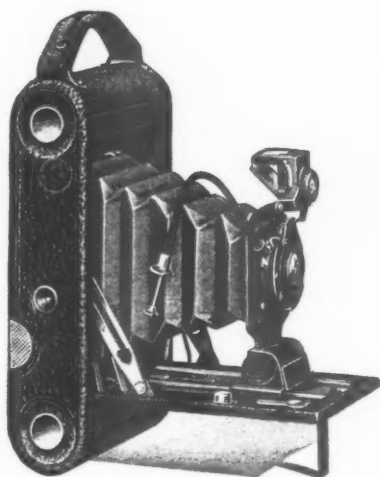
Addison went to his feet. Consuela stared straight into his opaque blue eyes, and his face was made to flush under the tan.

"Consuela, come!" It was the voice of the already jealous Teodoro Velez.

Consuela turned, and it seemed with regret, from the big American who had so quickly taken her part. And Addison, who had a fair understanding of Spanish, heard her tell Teodoro that he was "a pig."

The former pariah went straightway to the acting first sergeant, and submitted to arrest for assault and battery. He was taken immediately before the company's commanding officer, Captain Sterne, a man who did not belie the sound of his name; and the sentence meted out was six days at hard labor. Addison saluted and turned away, with a guard at his elbow. But he was not thinking of the six days at hard labor; he was thinking of Consuela Sanquebel, the woman that he knew he might never, never, forget. And yet, as yet, he could not have told why he could never forget her.

Down at the water-front, a new wharf of wood and stone was being built to take the place of the ancient and decaying wooden wharf. Here, in front of a man with a fixed bayonet, marched Matthew Addison to pay by the toil of his hands and the sweat of his brow for assaulting a comrade. He seemed a giant, a Brobdingnagian, among the brown-



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faced Visayans and the stooped and chattering Chinese who wrestled on his every side with earth in baskets and with timber and stone. A good half of the members of his company were lounging about quarters and watching him in mute wonderment as his big tanned arm-muscles rolled and unrolled at the work. When the broiling Philippine sun began to stare down from a point near to the zenith, he appeared to be working only the harder because of the relentless, blasting eye.

The day was almost gone. The sun was reaching for the fringe of cocoanut palms that lined the crest of a neck of land across the bay. The Visayans and the Chinese hastened off. But Addison was to put in ten hours, and he remained. The guard sat back on the beach and watched him lazily.

Then there were voices speaking in Spanish. Addison looked up; walking on the old wharf, with their backs turned to him, he saw Consuela Sanquebel and Teodoro Velez, both garbed in immaculate white. Consuela, he knew by a certain pinched desperation in her voice, was very angry.

"But it was you—you, Teodoro!—who should have struck the insolent Americano," she was saying. "You only stared, Teodoro—and you understand English as well as I do. I—I will never marry you, Teodoro, never, never, for you are a coward! I confess I had thought of acceding to my father's wishes, for my father's sake; I really might have allowed myself to be sold; but now—now that I know you to be so little a man, so utterly despicable—"

"Consuela!" interrupted Teodoro, his swarthy face drawn. "I assure you—"

The young woman continued, splendid in her passionate anger, while Addison, with no qualms whatever concerning propriety, stood enthralled at her show of spirit, and listened:

"Hush! You assure me you didn't have time before the Americano, the giant with the golden-yellow hair, struck the insolent man. Bah—you had as much time as he had! How I wish you were like him, Teodoro! Ah, that magnificent brute of a man! He is primitive—I saw it, read it plainly in his face; he should

have lived a thousand years ago. And so should I have lived a thousand years ago—for I too am primitive, a creature of other days. Oh, Teodoro, if you could but be masterful, as he is, if you could but take me by the wrists and drag me to the marriage altar, by force—but you can't, you can't: you're too puny! If you could only be something besides the sal-low, oily thing you are. I think—perhaps—I might marry you for my father's sake!"

"*Madre, mia*, Consuela, stop!" Teodoro cried in a smothered voice; and Addison felt that he would like to break the weakling's body over his giant knee.

But Consuela would not stop. She went on, her throat athrob, her eyes filled with a peculiarly triumphant light: "Now I am going to prove that you are a coward. This bay here before us, Teodoro Velez, is full of sharks—tiger-sharks—see—look! That fin there, Teodoro—do you see it? Ah—yes, you see it. You didn't have time to think before that magnificent brute with the wonderful eyes and the golden-yellow hair paid one of his countrymen in full for his insolence to me—eh? Then think now, prepare: I shall fall into the water here, merely to give you an opportunity of showing me that you are a brave man. Are you ready, Teodoro?" She smiled a taunting smile.

Addison gave a swift glance toward the placid surface of the bay. A few rods out he saw the tip of a lazily-moving dorsal fin. Then there was a splash, and with it there came in tones filled with derision:

"Save me, Teodoro—save me!"

Teodoro sank to the rotting wharf. He began to gibber. He covered his ashen face with his hands, that he might not see the glint of a huge, slimy body, the slash of a huge, forked tail, the bloody water. Addison leaped into the brine, went under, rose, swam to the floundering woman, caught her about the waist, and swam safely ashore with her. He walked, dripping, to the trembling Spaniard, and to him tendered his burden.

"No?" objected Consuela, with a sob, and looked up into the face of the Viking.



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Captain Sierne had walked up unnoticed. He put a hand on the prisoner's shoulder.

"Take her home," he ordered gruffly.

Addison nodded obediently. He turned from the wharf. Silently he began to move up one of Santa Fe's narrow, crooked streets. He was oblivious of the groups of soldiers and natives who watched him wide-mouthed; his eyes were turned to those, great and luminous and filled with things untold and unknown, of the woman in his arms. He remembered every word of that which she had said to the frail-souled Teodoro: so she understood—she alone of all the millions in the world, understood! The veneer, the thin veneer, fell away from Matthew Addison as he began to recognize the lights that lay hidden deep in her liquid black eyes. Before him now, instead of houses of nipa and wood and bamboo, lay a wilderness and a club with a head of stone. And this woman was going with him, this woman with a spirit that was a mate to his own! He had no thought of formality or ceremony. She would be his woman, and he her man; together they would roam the jungle, fighting for that which they ate, for that which they wore, sleeping wherever night found them. . . .

The eyes below his closed suddenly, and his dream faded. The thin veneer of education returned. He saw that her cheeks were flushed, and that one side of her olive-tinted throat throbbed violently; and he was in a fair way to hate himself for his staring. But—perhaps, *perhaps* Consuela had been dreaming too.

At the entrance to the grounds about the big house on the hill, he put her slowly to her feet. She seemed to cling to him—it seemed to be the clinging of one who is afraid to go. He crushed her hard against him, and kissed her with the kiss of a savage, and she did not cry out or strive to get away.

Then he left her and went, dazed and inclined to staggering, through the gathering twilight shadows and toward the quiet little town below.

Judging by precedent, it was the night for the captain of Company L to die by

means of a small-bore weapon in the hands of the unknown assassin who had left not the vestige of a clue to his identity. Just after darkness had fallen, a ring of guards had been stationed about the quarters of the commanding officer. These were all picked men; they had been chosen from the flower of the company.

There was no moon. But the heavens with their hosts of twinkling points of crystal fire looked down pityingly upon the world and its tangle of human loves and hates and passions, and the gloom was not deep—rather, it was gray and hazy. There was a singular absence of the usual night breeze; the air was close and hot and laden with odors of vegetation and earth. When the bugle sounded the go-to-sleep song of the soldier, Matthew Addison thought of anything but of slumber and rest. After an hour spent in watching absently the stars pass as in review across a slit in the nipa wall at the head of his army cot, he rose and dressed himself without a sound. Then he stole out and went toward the waterfront. He wished to be where he had heard the one woman on earth speak of him, where he had held her in his brawny arms while she had said "No!" almost fiercely to the sallow coward Velez. There was a sanctity about the spot, about the stones his own great hands had put in place. It was as natural as to breathe for him to go stooping low, to go skulking like an Indian; he found his face throbbing and his veins bursting full as he crept along in the shadows of the Philippine night.

When he had come to the wharf, he sat down, and hung his legs over the edge of the rotting planks. The tide was high, and his feet almost swept the water. Then his eyes, strong in the gloom, caught sight of a small white object floating in the brine below. He picked it up; it was a white canvas shoe, dainty, well-shaped, small. He kissed it, then wrapped it in a blue China-silk handkerchief, and thrust it inside his army shirt. . . .

There in the silence, his hearing was acute. He knew some one was coming before that person was within a dozen rods of him. He turned his gaze toward

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the town, and soon he saw a dim, black figure approaching, walking rapidly. Perhaps, he reasoned, it was Teodoro Velez, on his way from the house of the Sanquebels to his little schooner, which rode a cable-length out in the bay. The man came closer. Yes, he was sure it was the fallow tobacco merchant—sure of it. He began to hate Teodoro savagely, with a hatred intense and insensate. His hands closed in on the ends of the rotting wharf planking, and the unsound wood crushed in his powerful fingers.

The dim black figure was almost upon him. Then one of its feet stepped hard on the hand of the motionless Addison.

Addison's nerves were already strung as taut as violin strings. The world, the night, the heavens and the stars, turned red as blood at the pain the other's foot wrought within his hand. He became mad for the moment. He sprang to his feet, and gathered up the slight figure in his terrible brawny arms, in which there was the strength of a dozen other arms; he raised the body above his head and dashed it down to the stones that lay to his left; there was the crashing sound of bone and flesh against the hard wall. Then all became still, as still as death. His father's oft-repeated words rang in the ears of Addison:

"Sometime you'll kill a man!"

Two quick steps brought him to the limp and silent figure. He knelt beside it, tore open the clothing below the throat, and put his ear to the heart. It was utterly, absolutely still; it would never beat again. At last he had come to that strange and mysterious and necessary climax to his life in the walks of men; he had killed a man!

He sank dumbly beside the thing that had so recently been a human being, with all a human being's love of life and the living of it. But no great feeling of remorse swept over him; the wild, free spirit, the spirit ages and ages old, was not broken. He did not rub involuntarily at his brow to wipe away a red and red-hot brand that was as the brand of Cain. But he knew that he had placed a barrier between himself and the world that he had lived in. He began to mutter unintelligibly, and went to his feet.

In the whole universe there was but one who would understand that it was a perfectly natural procedure, and not a crime, for male brutes to kill one another—but one person who saw as he saw, who was primitive as he was primitive. He would go to her—to Consuela; he would tell her what he had done—that he had killed Teodoro Velez. He would take her in his arms and run away with her—back—back a thousand years....

Instead of going straightway through the sleeping town, he went around it. It was safer. He didn't stop to get his rifle and ammunition; he didn't want a rifle; he wanted a club with a head of stone. He began to climb the low hill on the brow of which set the big house of Don Enrique Sanquebel; it stood out in amazingly clear relief against the star-studded sky, and there was no light in it. When he had reached the front entrance to the grounds, he stopped and listened.

That which he heard filled his heart with a joy that was greater by far than any joy he had ever known before. Through the silent gloom, in the low voice of Consuela, came the jargon of a Montese mother-song—and it was heavy with a tigrish affection:

Sa boru ang m-m bele,
Nga boru ne Tatai!
Sa cayang ang m-m lata,
Nga boru ne Nanai!

He hastened across the grounds, dodging from one clump of tropical growth to another. He crossed the veranda noiselessly. The wide front door was open. He stole in without a sound save his own hoarse breathing, his foot-falls velvet. His feeling hands found a stairpost; he went up the steps; when he had reached the upper floor, he paused to listen.

The Montese mother-song came from beyond a window in the end of the long, broad hallway. He crept toward it; it was open, and he crept out to a roof garden, where he stood in the shadows of the eaves. On the tiled floor, a few yards from him, sat Consuela, singing.

"Consuela?"

"That is not Jacoba!" And in her voice was the fear that it really was her old duenna.

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"It is not Jacoba," replied Matthew Addison, hoarsely. "It is—I."

He took one step toward her. She rose and came to meet him, her footfalls cat-like, the footfalls of the jungle; and when she had come close to him he smelled the mingled odors of hibiscus and ylang-ylang. Her hands felt over his arms, upward and to his face, and stopped there.

"Yes, it is you—the magnificent brute. Why did you come here—has anything happened?"

In a masterful way, Addison led her out of the shadows of the broad eaves. He turned her face upward, and looked long into her eyes. He saw stars mirrored in their fathomless depths, and he knew that they were wet. He saw too, that she held something white in her arms; he looked closer; it was a very large wax doll, kept from childhood—and then Addison understood more about the Montese mother-song.

"Nothing has happened," he whispered, "except that I have killed Teodoro."

She did not speak, but leaned toward him. He put his great arms about her. The wax doll dropped to the tiling unnoticed, and broke to pieces with a soft clatter.

Addison continued: "As you said, I am a primitive man. I don't belong to this age—to these sane, educated times. . . . You told Teodoro that you too were primitive; that you belonged to an age a thousand years ago. I love you—I have never loved, and will never love, anyone else but you. Nobody ever understood but you. And you love me—I know it. So let us, you and I, go back—a thousand years—together! There is an island, small and uninhabited and out of the lanes of vessels—it is three days' sailing from here—it is a Garden of Eden. Let us leave this existence for

which we are unfitted, and go to this Garden of Eden, and be an Adam and an Eve in a young and primitive world of our own. Come, we will take one of the little schooners that lie down in the bay—"

Consuela drew back.

"But there is my father—"

Addison interrupted savagely: "Your father would have sold you to Teodoro, the coward, the yellow dog, for money!" He caught her by the shoulders in a grip that was painful, and would not let her go. "Come with me," he breathed. "You love me—I know it! Will you come? No need to answer. If you wont, I shall take you by force."

She made no verbal reply. But she leaned heavily against the man with the golden-yellow hair, in perfect submission and surrender. He picked her up bodily, and carried her downstairs and into the still, tropical night. Her arms were tightly clasped about his neck. Her upturned eyes mirrored the stars in their fathomless depths. There was a beatific smile on her face.

And so they sailed away that night to their Garden of Eden, this Adam and his Eve. When their journey's end was come, they sank the little vessel in water too deep to show even a masthead; then they turned to their paradise, bowed down, and kissed the clean, white sand of the beach.

And would it have made a difference, I wonder, if they had known: that the man Addison killed was not Teodoro Velez but the Don Enrique Sanquebel; that the Don had at the last moment persuaded the commander of Company L to spend the night aboard the schooner of Velez; that there was found in the dead man's clothing an automatic pistol of very small bore?

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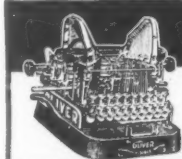
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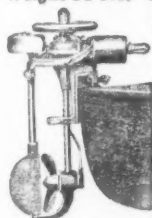


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GOD'S COUNTRY—AND THE WOMAN

Continued from page 490 of this issue

He sat up, and his face and hands were damp. It was black in the tent. Outside, even the bit of wind had died away. He reached out a hand, groping for Jean. The half-breed's blankets had not been disturbed. Then for a few moments he sat very still, listening, and wondering if the cry had been real. As he sat tense and still in the half daze of sleep it came again. It was the shrill laughing carnival of a loon out on the lake. More than once he had laughed at comrades who had shivered at that sound and cowered until its echoes had died away in moaning wails. He understood now. He knew why the Indians called it *moakwa*—"the mad thing." He thought of MacTavish, and threw the blanket from his shoulders, and crawled out of the tent.

Only a few faintly glowing embers remained where he had piled the birch logs. The sky was full of stars. The moon, still full and red, hung low in the west. The lake lay in a silvery and unruddled shimmer. Through the silence there came to him from a great distance the coughing challenge of a bull moose inviting a rival to battle. Then Philip saw a dark object huddled close to Josephine's tent.

He moved toward it, his moccasined feet making no sound. Something impelled him to keep as quiet as the night itself. And when he came near he was glad. For the object was Jean. He sat with his back to a block of birch twenty paces from the door of Josephine's tent. His head had fallen forward on his chest. He was asleep, but across his knees lay his rifle, gripped tightly in both hands. Quick as a flash the truth rushed upon Philip. Like a faithful dog Jean was guarding the girl. He had kept awake as long as he could, but even in slumber his hands did not give up their hold on the rifle.

Against whom was he guarding her? What danger could there be in this quiet, starlit night for Josephine? A

sudden chill ran through Philip. Did Jean mistrust *him*? Was it possible that Josephine had secretly expressed a fear which made the Frenchman watch over her while she slept? As silently as he had approached he moved away until he stood in the sand at the shore of the lake. There he looked back. He could just see Jean, a dark blot; and all at once the unfairness of his suspicion came upon him. To him Josephine had given proofs of her faith which nothing could destroy. And he understood now the reason for that tired, drawn look in Jean's face. This was not the first night he had watched. Every night he had guarded her until, in the small hours of dawn, his eyes had closed heavily as they were closed now.

The beginning of the gray Northern dawn was not far away. Philip knew that without looking at the hour. He sensed it. It was in the air, the stillness of the forest, in the appearance of the stars and moon. To prove himself he looked at his watch with the match with which he lighted his pipe. It was half past three. At this season of the year dawn came at five.

He walked slowly along the strip of sand between the dark wall of the forest and the lake. Not until he was a mile away from the camp did he stop. Then something happened to betray the uneasy tension to which his nerves were drawn. A sudden crash in the brush close at hand drew him about with a start, and even while he laughed at himself he stood with his automatic in his hand.

He heard the whimpering, babyish-like complaint of the porcupine that had made the sound, and still chuckling over his nervousness he seated himself on a white drift-log that had lain bleaching for half a century in the sand.

The moon had fallen behind the western forests; the stars were becoming fainter in the sky, and about him the darkness was drawing in like a curtain.

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He loved this hour that bridged the Northern night with the Northern day, and he sat motionless and still, covering the glow of fire in his pipe bowl with the palm of his hand.

Out of the brush ambled the porcupine, chattering and talking to itself in its queer and good-humored way, fat as a poplar bud ready to burst, and so intent on reaching the edge of the lake that it passed in its stupid innocence so close that Philip might have struck it with a stick. And then there swooped down from out of the cover of the black spruce a great gray owl, that came with the silence and lightness of a huge snowflake, hovered for an instant over the porcupine, and then retreated from those quills into the darkness. And the porcupine, still oblivious, drank his fill leisurely and ambled back as he had come, chattering his song of good-humor.

One after another there came now the sounds that merged dying night into the birth of day, and for the hundredth time Philip listened to the wonders that never grew old for him. The laugh of the loon was no longer a raucous, mocking cry of exultation and triumph, but a timid, questioning note—half drowsy, half filled with fear; and from the tree tops came the still lower notes of the owls, their night's hunt done, and seeking now the densest cover for the day. And then, from deep back in the forests, came a cry that was filled with both hunger and defiance—the wailing howl of a wolf. With these night sounds came the first *cheep, cheep, cheep* of the little brush sparrow, still drowsy and uncertain, but faintly heralding the day. Wings fluttered in the spruce and cedar thickets. From far overhead came the honking of Canada geese flying southward. And one by one the stars went out, and in the southeastern skies a gray hand reached up slowly over the forests and wiped darkness from the earth. Not until then did Philip rise from his seat and turn his face toward camp.

He tried to throw off the feeling of oppression that still clung to him. By the time he reached camp he had partly succeeded. The fire was burning brightly again, and Jean was busy preparing breakfast. To his surprise he saw Jose-

phine standing outside of her tent. She had finished brushing her hair, and was plaiting it in a long braid. He had wondered how they would meet that morning. His face flushed warm as he approached her. The thrill of their kiss was still on his lips, and his heart sent the memory of it burning in his eyes as he came up. Josephine turned to greet him. She was pale and calm. There were dark lines under her eyes, and her voice was steady and emotionless as she said "Good morning." It was as if he had dreamed the thing that had passed the night before. There was neither glow of tenderness, of regret, or of memory in her eyes. Her smile was wan and forced. He knew that she was calling upon his chivalry to forget that one moment before the door of her tent. He bowed, and said simply:

"I'm afraid you didn't sleep well, Josephine. Did I disturb you when I stole out of camp?"

"I heard nothing," she replied. "Nothing but the cries of that terrible bird out on the lake. I'm afraid I didn't sleep much."

The atmosphere of the camp that morning weighted Philip's heart with a heaviness which he could not throw off. He performed his share of the work with Jean, and tried to talk to him, but Croiset would only reply to his most pointed remarks. He whistled. He shouted out a song back in the timber as he cut an armful of dry birch, and he returned to Jean and the girl laughing, the wood piled to his chin and the ax under his arm. Neither showed that they had heard him. The meal was eaten in a chilly silence that filled him with deepest foreboding. Josephine excused herself before Jean and he were through, and went to her tent. A moment later Philip went down to his canoe.

In the rubber sack was the last of his tobacco. He was fumbling for it when his heart gave a great jump. A voice had spoken softly behind him:

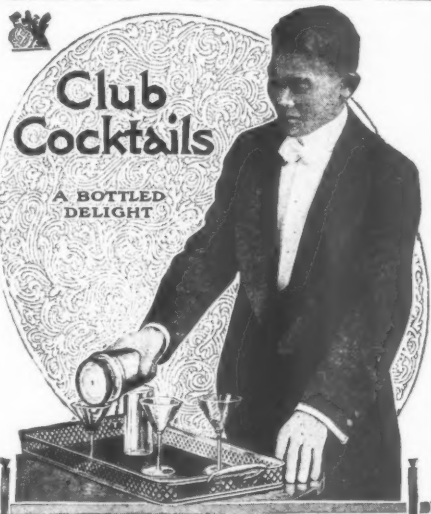
"Philip."

Slowly, unbelieving, he turned. It was Josephine. For the first time she had called him by his name. And yet the speaking of it seemed to put a distance between them, for her voice was calm



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and without emotion, as she might have spoken to Jean.

"I lay awake nearly all of the night, thinking," she said. "It was a terrible thing that we did, and I am sorry—sorry—"

In the quickening of her breath he saw how heroically she was fighting to speak steadily to him.

"You can't understand," she resumed, facing him with the steadiness of despair. "You cannot understand—until you reach Adare House. And that is what I dread, the hour when you will know how terrible it was for me to do what I did last night. If you were like most other men, I wouldn't care so much. But you have been different."

He replied in words which he would not have dared to utter a few hours before.

"And yet, back there when you first asked me to go with you as your husband, you knew what I would find at Adare House?" he asked, his voice low and tense. "You knew?"

"Yes."

"Then what has produced the change that makes you fear to have me go on? Is it because—" He leaned toward her, and his face was bloodless. "Is it because you care for me?"

"Because I respect you, yes," she said in a voice that disappointed him. "I don't want to hurt you. I don't want you to go back into the world thinking of me as you will. You have been honest with me. I do not blame you for what happened last night. The fault was mine. And I have come to you now, so that you will understand that, no matter how I may appear and act, I have faith and trust in you. I would give anything that last night might be wiped out of our memories. That is impossible, but you must not think of it and you must not talk to me any more as you have, until we reach Adare House. And then—"

Her white face was pathetic as she turned away from him.

"You will not want to," she finished. "After that you will fight for me simply because you are a knight among men, and because you have promised. There will not even be the promise to bind you, for I release you from that."

Philip stood silent as she left him. He knew that to follow her and to force further conversation upon her after what she had said would be little less than brutal. She had given him to understand that from now on he was to hold himself toward her with greater restraint, and the blood flushed hot and uncomfortable into his face as he realized how he had overstepped his bounds.

Jean gave little rest that day, and by noon they had covered twenty miles of the lake-way. An hour for dinner, and they went on. At times Josephine used her paddle, and not once during the day did she sit with her face to Philip. Late in the afternoon they camped on a portage fifty miles from Adare House.

There were no stars or moon in the sky this night. The wind had changed, and came from the north. In it was the biting chill of the Arctic, and overhead was a gray-dun mass of racing cloud. A dozen times Jean turned his face anxiously from the fire into the north, and held wet fingers high over his head to see if in the air was that peculiar sting by which the forest man foresees the approach of snow.

At last he said to Philip: "The wind will grow, m'sieur," and picked up his axe.

Philip followed with his own, and they piled about Josephine's tent a thick protection of spruce and cedar boughs. Then together they brought three or four big logs to the fire. After that Philip went into their own tent, stripped off his outer garments, and buried himself in his sleeping bag. For a long time he lay awake and listened to the increasing wail of the wind in the tall spruce tops. It was not new to him. For months he had fallen asleep with the thunderous crash of ice and the screaming fury of storm in his ears. But to-night there was something in the sound which sunk him still deeper into the gloom which he had found it impossible to throw off. At last he fell asleep.

When he awoke he struck a match and looked at his watch. It was four o'clock, and he dressed and went outside. The wind had died down. Jean was already busy over the cook fire, and in Jose-

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phine's tent he saw the light of a candle. She appeared a little later, wrapped close in a thick red Hudson's Bay coat, and with a marten skin cap on her head. Something in her first appearance, the picturesqueness of her dress, the jauntiness of the little cap, and the first flush of the fire in her face filled him with the hope that sleep had given her better spirit. A closer glance dashed this hope. Without questioning her he knew that she had spent another night of mental torture.

All that day the sky hung heavy and dark with cloud, and the water was rough. Early in the afternoon the wind rose again, and Croisset ran alongside them to suggest that they go ashore. He spoke to Philip, but Josephine interrupted quickly:

"We must go on, Jean," she demanded. "If it is not impossible we must reach Adare House to-night."

"It will be late—midnight," replied Jean. "And if it grows rougher—"

A dash of spray swept over the bow into the girl's face.

"I don't care for that," she cried. "Wet and cold won't hurt us." She turned to Philip, as if needing his argument against Jean's. "Is it not possible to get me home to-night?" she asked.

"It is two o'clock," said Philip. "How far have we to go, Jean?"

"It is not the distance, m'sieur—it is that," replied Jean, as a wave sent another dash of water over Josephine. "We are twenty miles from Adare House."

Philip looked at Josephine.

"It is best for you to go ashore and wait until to-morrow, Josephine. Look at that stretch of water ahead—a mass of whitecaps."

"Please, please take me home," she pleaded, and now she spoke to Philip alone. "I'm not afraid. And I cannot live through another night like last night."

Philip turned to the half-breed, who had drifted a canoe-length away.

"We'll go on, Jean," he called. "We can make it by keeping close inshore. Can you swim?"

"*Oui, m'sieur*; but Josephine—"

"I can swim with her," replied Philip, and Josephine saw the old life and

strength in his face again as she turned to the white-capped seas ahead of them.

Hour after hour they fought their way on after that, the wind rising stronger in their faces, the seas burying them deeper; and each time that Josephine looked back she marveled at the man behind her, bare-headed, his hair drenched, his arms naked to the elbows, and his clear gray eyes always smiling confidence at her through the gloom of mist. Not until darkness was falling about them did Jean drop near enough to speak again. Then he shouted:

"Another hour and we reach Snowbird River, m'sieur. That is four miles from Adare House. But ahead of us the wind rushes across a wide sweep of the lake. Shall we hazard it?"

"Yes, yes," cried the girl, answering for Philip. "We must go on!"

Without another word Croisset led the way. The wind grew stronger with each minute's progress. Shouting for Jean to hold his canoe for a space, Philip steadied his own canoe while he spoke to the girl.

"Come back to me as quietly as you can, Josephine," he said. "Pass the dunage ahead of you to take the place of your weight. If anything happens I want you near me."

Cautiously Josephine did as he bade her, and as she added slowly to the ballast in the bow she drew little by little nearer to Philip. Her hand touched an object in the bottom of the canoe as she came close to him. It was one of his moccasins. She saw now his naked throat and chest. He had stripped off his heavy woolen shirt as well as his footwear. He reached out, and his hand touched her lightly as she huddled down in front of him.

"Splendid!" he laughed. "You're a little brick, Josephine, and the best comrade in a canoe that I ever saw. Now if we go over, all I've got to do is to swim ashore with you. Is it good walking to Adare House?"

He did not hear her reply; in the darkness he could no longer see Croisset or his canoe. But Jean's shouts came back to him on the wind, and over Josephine's head he answered. He was glad that it was so dark the girl could not see

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what was ahead of them now. Once or twice his own breath stopped short, when it seemed that the canoe had taken the fatal plunge which he was dreading. Every minute he figured the distance from the shore, and his chances of swimming it if they were overturned. And then, after a long time, there came a sudden lull in the wind, and the seas grew less rough. Jean's voice came from near them, filled with a thrill of relief.

"We are behind the point," he shouted. "Another mile and we will enter the Snowbird, m'sieur!"

Philip leaned forward in the gloom. Josephine's cap had fallen off, and for a moment his hand rested on her wet and wind-blown hair.

"Did you hear that?" he cried. "We're almost home."

"Yes," she shivered, "and I'm glad—glad—"

Was it an illusion of his own, or did she seem to shiver and draw away from him at the touch of his hand? Even in the blackness he could *feel* that she was huddled forward, her face in her hands. She did not speak to him again. When they entered the smooth water of the Snowbird, Jean's canoe drew close in beside them, but not a word fell from Croisset. Like shadows they moved up the stream between two black walls of forest. A steadily increasing excitement, a feeling that he was upon the eve of strange events, grew stronger in Philip. His arms and back ached; his legs were cramped; the last of his splendid strength had been called upon in the fight with wind and seas, but he forgot this exhaustion in anticipation of the hour that was drawing near. He knew that Adare House would reveal to him things which Josephine had not told him.

Half an hour passed, and in that time his companion did not move or speak. He heard faintly a distant wailing cry. He recognized the sound. It was not a wolf-cry, but the howl of a husky dog. He fancied then that the girl moved, that she was gripping the sides of the canoe with her hands. For fifteen minutes more there was not a sound but the dip of the paddles and the monotone of the wind sweeping through the forest tops. Then the dog howled again, much nearer;

and this time he was joined by a second, a third, and a fourth, until the night was filled with a din that made Philip stare wonderingly off into the blackness. There were fifty dogs if there was one in that yelping, howling horde, he told himself, and they were coming with the swiftness of the wind.

From his canoe Croisset broke the silence.

"The wind has given the pack our scent, *ma Josephine*, and they are coming to meet you," he said.

The girl made no reply, but Philip could see now that she was sitting tense and erect. As suddenly as it had begun, the cry of the pack ceased. The dogs had reached the water, and were waiting. Not until Jean swung his canoe toward shore and the bow of it scraped on a gravelly bar did they give voice again, and then so close and fiercely that involuntarily Philip held his canoe back. In another moment Josephine had stepped lightly over the side in a foot of water. He could not see what happened then, except that the bar was filled with a shadowy horde of leaping, crowding, yelping beasts, and that Josephine was the center of them. He heard her voice clear and commanding, crying out their names—Tyr, Captain, Bruno, Thor, Wamba—until their number seemed without end; he heard the metallic snap of fangs, quick, panting breaths, the shuffling of padded feet; and then the girl's voice grew more clear, and the sounds less, until he heard nothing but the bated breath of the pack and a low, smothered whine.

In that moment the wind-blown clouds above them broke in a narrow rift across the skies, and for an instant the moon shone through. What he saw then drew Philip's breath from him in a wondering gasp.

On the white bar stood Josephine. The wind on the lake had torn the strands of her long braid loose and her hair swept in a damp and clinging mass to her hips. She was looking toward him, as if about to speak. But it was the pack that made him stare. A sea of great shaggy heads and crouching bodies surrounded her, a fierce yellow-and-green-eyed horde flattened like a single beast

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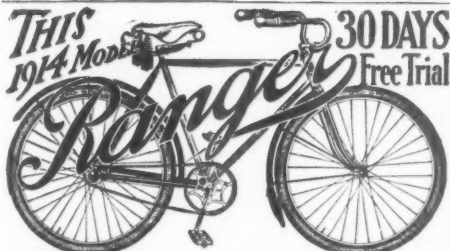
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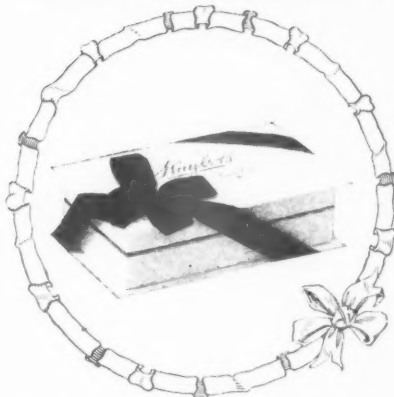


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upon their bellies, their heads turned toward her, their throats swelling and their eyes gleaming in the joyous excitement of her return. An instant of that strange and thrilling picture, and the night was black again. The girl's voice spoke softly. Bodies shuffled out of her path. And then she said, quite near to him.

"Are you coming, Philip?"

CHAPTER VIII

NOT without a slight twinge of trepidation did Philip step from his canoe to her. He had not heard Croisset go ashore and for a moment he felt as if he were deliberately placing himself at the mercy of a wolf-pack. Josephine may have guessed the effect of the savage spectacle he had beheld from the canoe, for she was close to the water's edge to meet him. She spoke, and in the pitch darkness he reached out. Her hand was groping for him, and her fingers closed firmly about his own.

"They are my bodyguard, and I have trained them all from puppies," she explained. "They don't like strangers, but will fight for anything that I touch. So I will lead you." She turned with him toward the pack, and cried in her clear, commanding voice, "*Marche*, boys!—Tyr, Captain, Thor, *Marche*! Hoosh, hoosh, *marcbe*."

It seemed as if a hundred eyes gleamed out of the blackness; then there was a movement, a whining, snarling, snapping twisting of the gloom, and as they walked up the bar and into a narrow trail Philip could hear the pack falling out to the side and behind them. Also he knew that Jean was ahead of them now. He did not speak, nor did Josephine offer to break the silence again. Still letting her hand rest in his, she followed close behind the half-breed. Her hand was so cold that Philip involuntarily held it tighter in his own, as if to give it warmth. He could feel her shivering, and yet something told him that what he sensed in the darkness was not caused by chill alone. Several times her fingers closed shudderingly about his.

They had not walked more than a couple of hundred yards when a turn brought them out of the forest trail, and

the blackness ahead was broken by a solitary light, a dimly lighted window in a pit of gloom.

"Marja is not expecting us to-night," apologized the girl nervously. "That is Adare House."

Philip had expected light and life at Adare House. Here were only darkness and a death-like quiet. Even the one light seemed turned low. As they advanced toward it, a great shadow grew out of the gloom; and then, all at once, it seemed as if a curtain of the forest had been drawn aside, and away beyond the looming shadow Philip saw the glow of a camp fire. From that distant fire there came the challenging howl of a dog, and instantly it was taken up by a score of fierce tongues about them. As Josephine's voice rose to quell the disturbance, the light in the window grew suddenly brighter, and then a door opened and in it stood the figures of a man and woman. Philip caught the flash of the lamp-glow on the barrel of a rifle.

Josephine paused.

"You will forgive me if I ask you to let me go on alone, and you follow with Jean?" she whispered. "I will try and see you again to-night, when I have dressed myself, and I am in better condition to show you hospitality."

Jean was so close that he overheard her.

"We will follow," he said softly. "Go ahead, *ma chérie*."

His voice was filled with an infinite gentleness, almost of pity; and as Josephine drew her hand from Philip's and went on ahead of them he dropped back close to the other's side.

"Something will happen soon which may turn your heart to stone and ice, m'sieur," he said, and his voice was scarce above a whisper. "I wanted her to tell you back there, two days ago, but she shrank from the ordeal then. It is coming to-night. And, however it may affect you, m'sieur, I ask you not to show the horror of it, but to have pity. You have perhaps known many women, but you have never known one like our Josephine. In her soul is the purity of the blue skies, the sweetness of the wild flowers, the goodness of our Blessed

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“Always, Jean. I swear that,” Philip answered.

“Come,” said Jean. “And may God have pity on you if you fail to keep your word in all you have promised, M’sieur Philip Darcambal. For from this hour on you are Philip Darcambal, of Montreal, the husband of Josephine Adare, our beloved lady of the forests. Come, m’sieur!”

CHAPTER IX

WITHOUT another word Jean led the way to the door, which had partly closed after Josephine. For a moment he paused with his hand upon it, and then entered. Philip was close behind him. His first glance swept the room in search of the girl. She had disappeared, with her two companions. For a moment he heard voices beyond a second door in front of him. Then there was silence.

In wonder he stared about him, and Jean did not interrupt his gaze. He stood in a great room whose walls were of logs and axe-hewn timbers. It was a room forty feet long by twenty in width, massive in its build, with walls and ceiling stained a deep brown. In one end was a fireplace large enough to hold a pile of logs six feet in length, and in this a small fire was smoldering. In the center of the room was a long, massive table, its timber carved by the axe, and on this a lamp was burning. The floor was strewn with fur rugs, and on the walls hung the mounted heads of beasts. These things impressed themselves upon Philip first. It was as if he had stepped suddenly out of the world in which he was living, into the ancient hall of a wild and half-savage thane whose bones had turned to dust centuries ago.

Not until Jean spoke to him, and led the way through the room, was this first impression swept back by his swift and closer observation of detail. About him extreme age was curiously blended

with the modern. His breath stopped short when he saw in the shadow of the farther wall a piano, with a bronze lamp suspended from the ceiling above it. His eyes caught the shadowy outline of cases filled with books; he saw close to the fireplace wide, low-built divans covered with cushions; and over the door through which they passed hung a framed copy of da Vinci's masterpiece, “*La Gioconda*,” the Smiling Woman.

Into a dimly lighted hall he followed Jean, who paused a moment later before another door, which he opened. Philip waited while he struck a match and lighted a lamp. He knew at a glance that this was to be his sleeping apartment, and as he took in its ample comfort, the broad, low bed behind its old-fashioned curtains, the easy chairs, the small table covered with books and magazines, and the richly furred rugs on the floor, he experienced a new and strange feeling of restfulness. Jean was already on his knees before a fireplace, touching a match to a pile of birch, and as the inflammable bark spurted into flame and the small logs began to crackle, he rose to his feet and faced Philip. Both were soaked to the skin. Jean's hair hung lank and wet about his face, and his hollow cheeks were cadaverous. In spite of the hour and the place, Philip could not restrain a laugh.

“We look like a couple of drowned water-rats!” he chuckled.

“I will bring up your sack, m’sieur,” responded Jean. “If you haven't dry clothes of your own, you will find garments behind the curtains. I think some of them will fit you. Then we will have supper.”

A few moments after Jean left him, an Indian woman brought him a pail of hot water. He was half stripped and enjoying a steaming sponge bath when Croisset returned with his dunnage sack. The Arctic had not left him much to choose from, but behind the curtains which Jean had pointed out to him he found a good-sized wardrobe. He glowed with warmth and comfort when he had finished dressing. The chill was gone from his blood. He no longer felt the ache in his arms and back. He lighted his pipe, and for a few moments stood



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with his back to the crackling fire, listening, and waiting. Through the thick walls no sound came to him. He walked to the one large window in his room and stared out into the darkness. The edge of the forest was not far away, for he could hear the sighing of the wind in the tree-tops.

For an hour he waited with growing impatience for Jean's return or some word from Josephine. At last there came another knock at the door. He opened it eagerly. To his disappointment neither Jean nor the girl stood there, but the Indian woman who had brought him the hot water, carrying in her hands a metal server covered with steaming dishes. She moved silently past him, placed the server on the table, and was turning to go when he spoke to her.

"*Tan'se a ilumuche hooyun?*" he asked in Cree.

She went out as if she had not heard him, and the door closed behind her. With growing perplexity, Philip directed his attention to the food. This manner of serving his supper partly convinced him that he would not see Josephine again that night. He was hungry, and began to do justice to the contents of the dishes. In one dish he found a piece of fruit cake and half a dozen pickles, and he knew that at least Josephine had helped to prepare his supper. Half an hour later, the Indian woman returned as silently as before and carried away the dishes. He followed her to the door and stood for a few moments looking down the hall. He looked at his watch. It was after ten o'clock. Where was Jean, he wondered? Why had Josephine not sent some word to him—at least an explanation telling him why she could not see him as she had promised? Why had Croisset spoken in that strange way just before they entered the door of Adare House? Nothing had happened, and he was becoming more and more convinced that nothing would happen—that night.

He turned suddenly from the door, facing the window in his room. The next instant he stood tense and staring. A face was glued against the pane, dark,

sinister, with eyes that shone with the menacing glare of a beast. In a flash it was gone. But in that brief space Philip had seen enough to hold him like one turned to stone, still staring where the face had been, his heart beating like a hammer. As the face disappeared, he had seen a hand pass swiftly through the light, and in the hand was a pistol. It was not this fact, nor the suddenness of the apparition, that drew the gasping breath from his lips. It was the face, filled with a hatred that was almost madness—the face of Jean Jacques Croisset!

Scarcely was it gone when Philip sprang to the table, snatched up his automatic, and ran out into the hall. The end of the hall he believed opened out-doors, and he ran swiftly in that direction, his moccasined feet making no sound. He found a door locked with an iron bar. It took him but a moment to throw this up, open the door, and leap out into the night. The wind had died away, and it was snowing. In the silence he stood and listened, his eyes trying to find some moving shadow in the gloom. His fighting blood was up. He believed that if he had stood another moment with his back to the window, he would have been killed. Murder was in the half-breed's eyes. His pistol was ready. Only Philip's quick turning from the door saved him. It was evident that Jean had fled from the window as quickly as Philip had run out into the hall. Or, if he had not fled, he was hiding in the gloom of the building. At the thought that Jean might be crouching in the shadows, Philip turned suddenly and moved swiftly and silently along the log wall of Adare House. He half expected a shot out of the darkness, and with his thumb he pressed down the safety lever of his automatic. He had almost reached his own window when a sound just beyond the pale filter of light that came out of it drew him more cautiously into the pitch darkness of the deep shadow next the wall. In another moment he was sure. Some other person was moving through the gloom beyond the streak of light.

The next installment of "God's Country—and the Woman" will be in the August Red Book, on the news-stands July 23.